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INDIA TODAY

1990 Jan-Feb

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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JANUARY 15, 1990

INDIA TODAY

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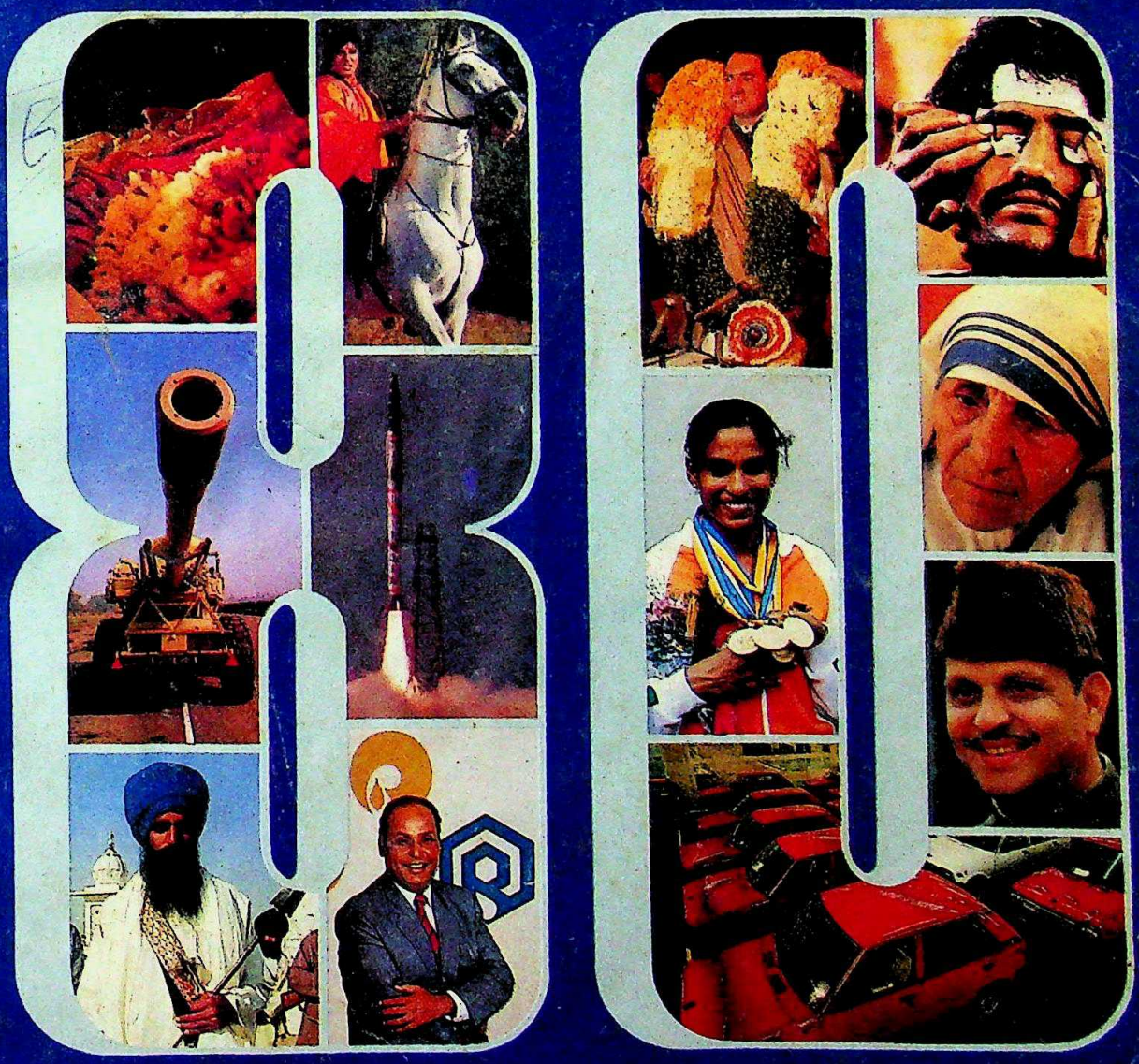
THE 80's



A MOMENTOUS DECADE

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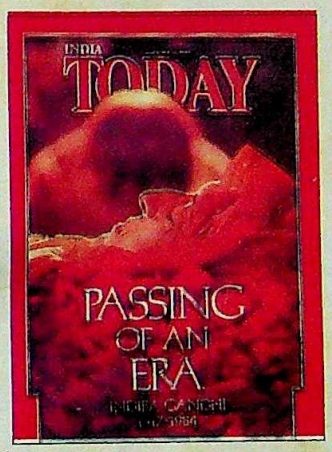
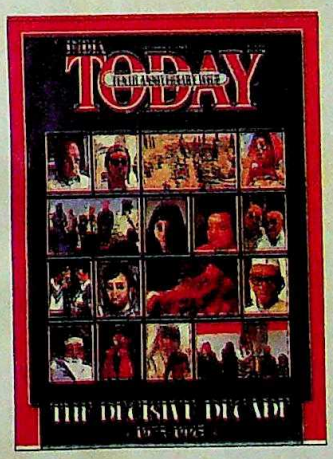
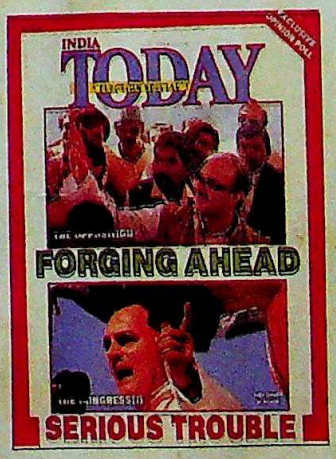
A decade is a long time in the life of a newsmagazine. Particularly of a young one like INDIA TODAY. The '80s were the first full decade in the magazine's 14-year existence as it grew and moulded itself to face the challenge of recording the bewildering pace of change. If much has changed in India through the '80s, INDIA TODAY has hardly remained static. It entered the decade with an editorial staff of 31. Today, it has 104. In 1980, it had a circulation of 1.35 lakh copies in English; now it has 3.60 lakh, alongside an international edition of 26,000 copies. And with editions in three more languages—Hindi (2.17 lakh), Tamil (2.70 lakh) and Malayalam (85,000)—the circulation adds up to 9.58 lakh copies with an estimated readership of more than one crore readers.

The growth of INDIA TODAY itself is a reflection of the '80s when the reader hungered for more information and the consumer for more goodies. The reader demanded a publication that would help him understand this eventful decade. INDIA TODAY has sought to fulfil that need through increase of staff as well as technology. The editorial office now uses state-of-the-art computers and the number of correspondents has grown from five in 1980 to 26, the photographers from one to seven.

For INDIA TODAY too, it was a rewarding decade. Its staffers took the pick of awards for investigative reporting, photography, writings on rural areas and women's affairs. The magazine also bagged prestigious awards for design and printing and was chosen Asia's best magazine in 1989.







Decades normally don't come in neat political packages. The '80s did. The decade began with Mrs Gandhi triumphantly returning to power, having written the obituary of India's first non-Congress government. It ended with the Opposition back in power, having put a question mark on the future of one of the world's most durable democratic dynasties. It is no exaggeration to say that politically the story of the decade is that of the fortunes of the first family of Indian politics. The family dominated the magazine's cover. Between Rajiv Gandhi (42), Mrs Gandhi (24), Sanjay Gandhi (4) and Maneka (1), a member of the family figured, individually or with others on one-third of the covers through the decade.

IT was also a decade in which the twin threats of communalism and terrorism grew into menacing proportions, when the rule of the gun often overwhelmed the rule of the law. But there were positive changes as well: the middle class boom that dramatically changed the face of urban India, the sweeping changes in the arts and sciences, and the policy of liberalisation that shook Indian economy and industry out of its constrictive complacency. This special issue is an effort to encapsulate it all: the change, the hope, the frustrations, the glory, the shame, the scandals: the very spirit of a momentous decade.

Through the entire '80s, INDIA TODAY produced just three special issues, each devoted to just one theme: on Mrs Gandhi's assassination (November 30, 1984), on completing its own 10 years of existence (December 31, 1985) and on the 1989 elections (November 31). I hope this issue too does what we have tried to do through the decade: keeping our readers well-informed on the dramatic changes that made the '80s a decade to remember.

I wish our readers a Happy New Year and an exciting decade ahead.

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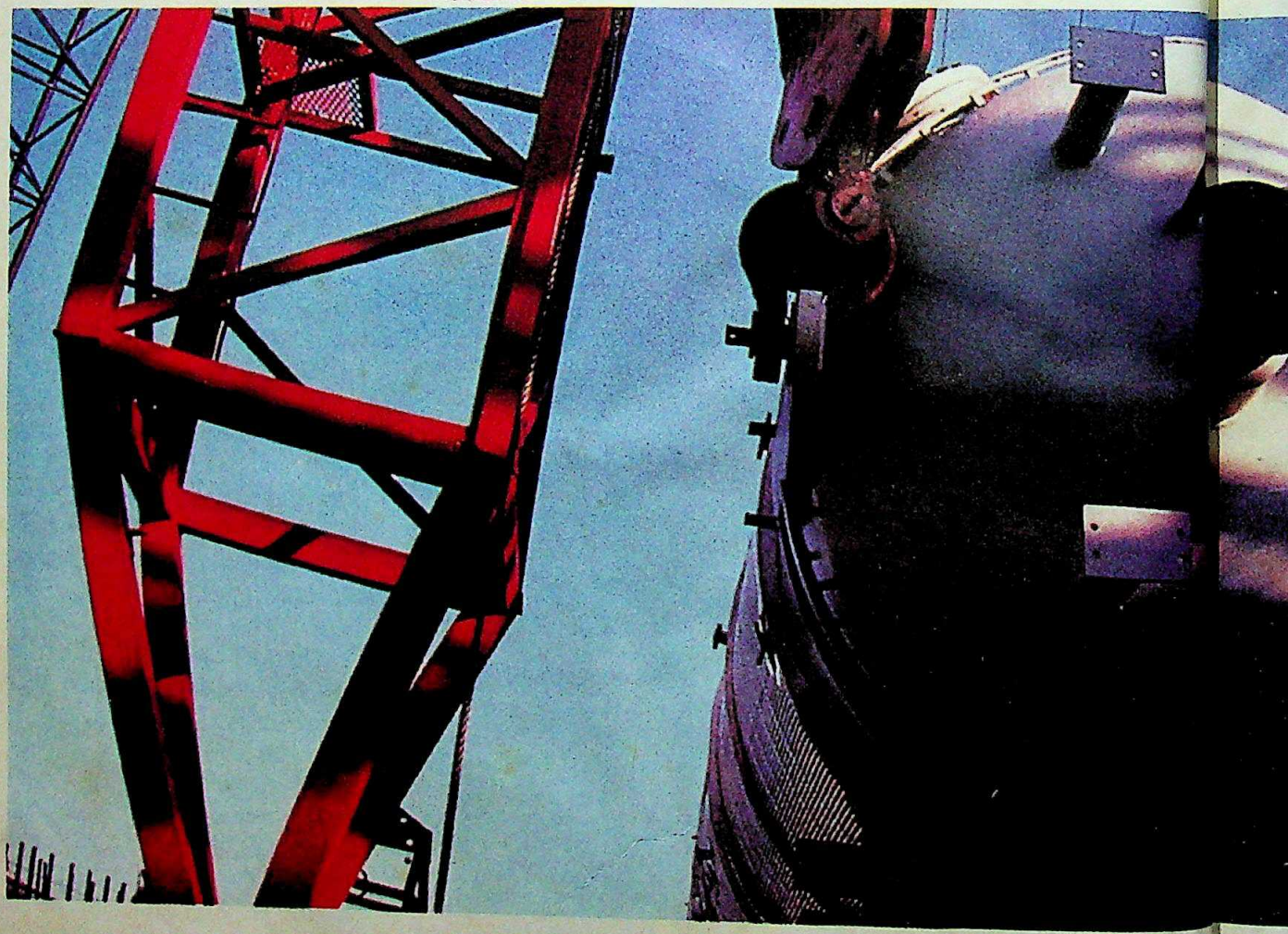

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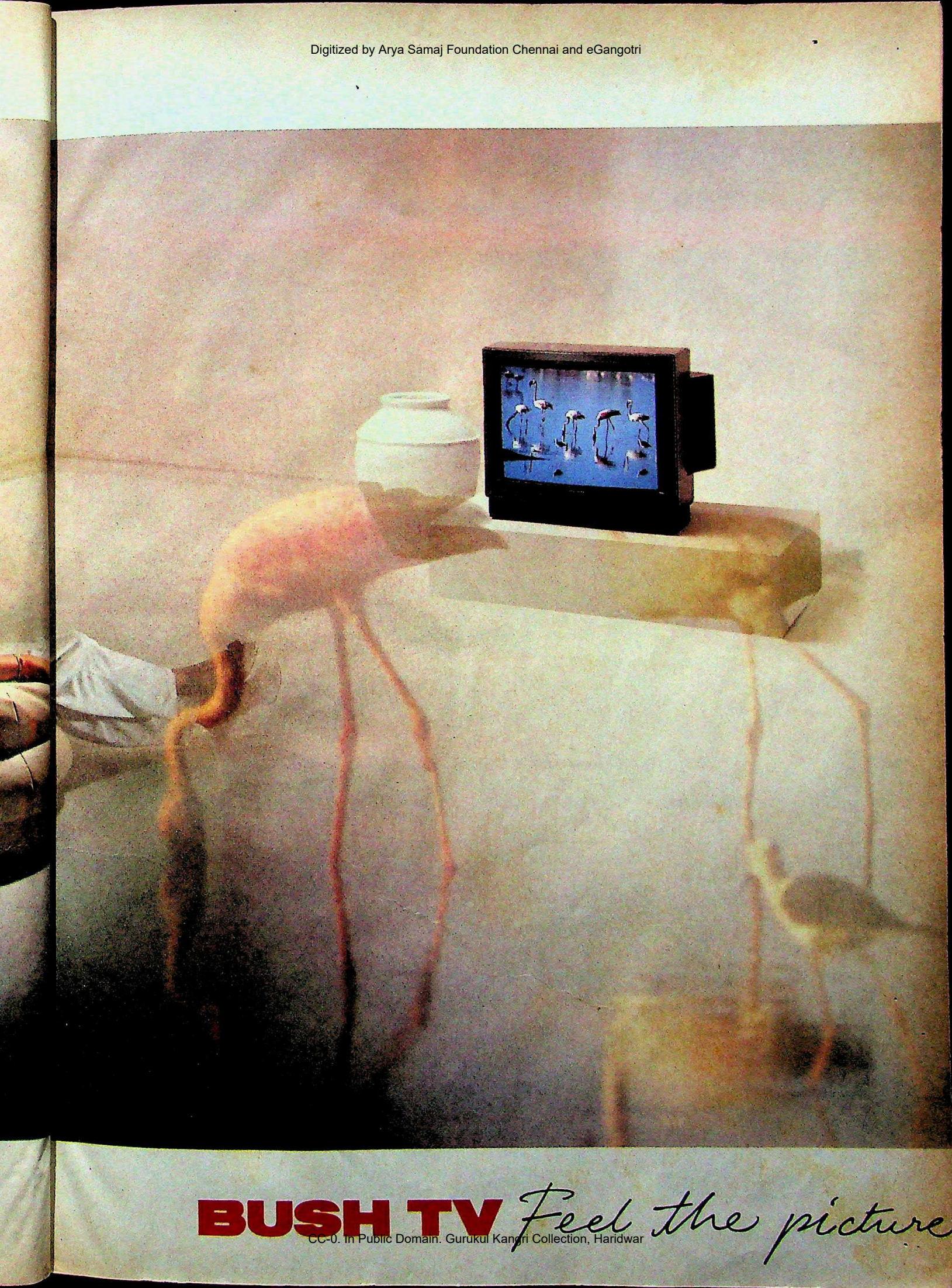

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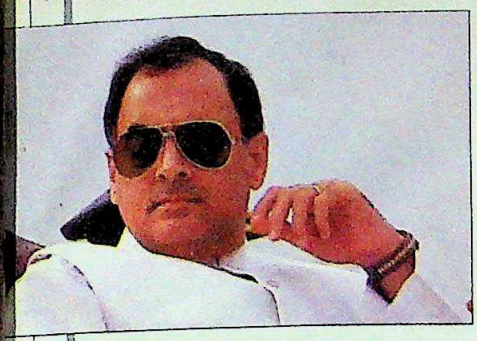

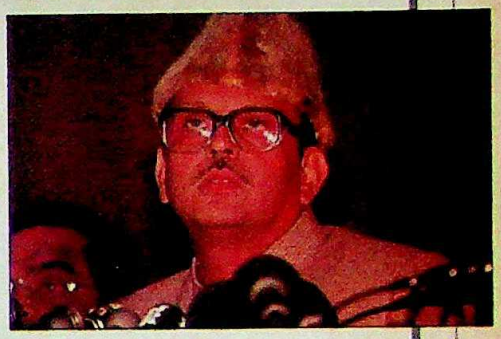

THE 80's

IN retrospect there could not have been a more action-packed 10 years. India in the '80s experienced it all. The power, the glory and the agony. There was the threat of mounting terrorism, the looming spectre of communalism; the exhilaration of sporting glory; the quiet pride of scientific achievement; the larger-than-life cinema, the cutthroat politics, and the ever-expanding business base. The '80s also witnessed the maturing of Indian democracy, the coming of age of the Indian voter. A look at all that made the decade memorable.

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KASHMIR VALLEY

Drifting Dangerously

Secessionists hold sway as Farooq Abdullah's Government is paralysed and the Centre gropes for an effective strategy.

EARLIER, there was sullen anger. Now, there is violent fury. Once, youth used to throw stones at buses. Now, they hurl sophisticated plastic explosives at government offices. They used to be called the "angry boys". Now they are hailed as *Mujahedin* (freedom fighters). Yesterday, they masked their faces to wave flags. Today they do that to brandish Kalashnikovs. Six months ago, a police picket was enough to scare mobs in downtown Srinagar. Now, it takes two machine-gun-fitted armoured cars. From a valley of tears (*see* INDIA TODAY, May 31) Kashmir is swiftly climbing up a separatist hill marked by the jagged rocks of militancy, blind hatred and bloodshed.

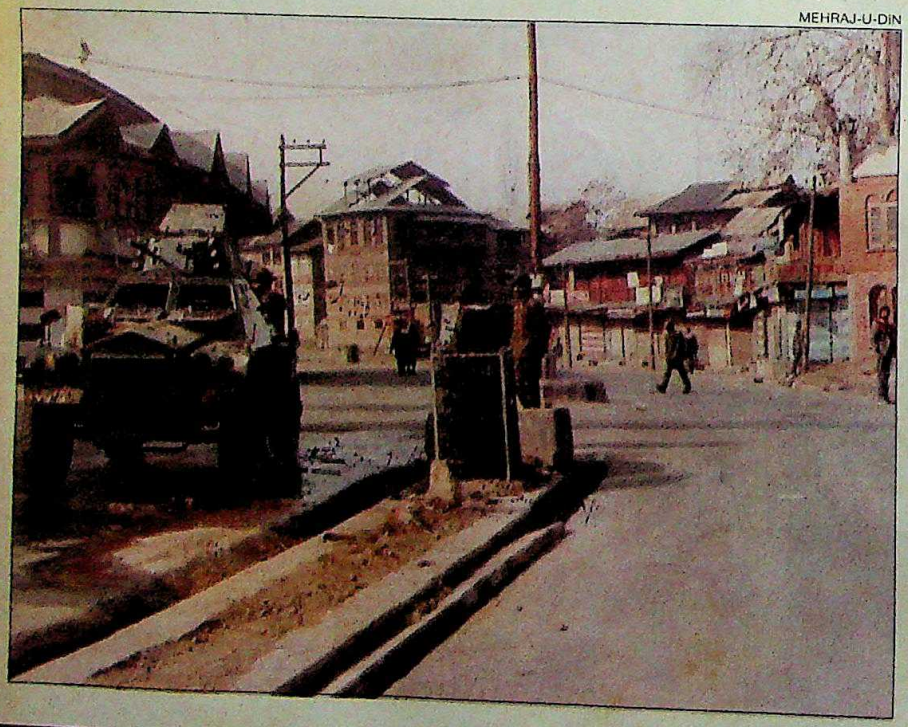
Last fortnight, Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, in a desperate bid to salvage the situation, juggled his cabinet and bureaucracy and ordered a crackdown on militants. For the present, the Centre seems to have decided that dismissing the Farooq Government would only worsen matters. But in a meeting with Farooq, Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed ordered him to put the administration back on the rails.

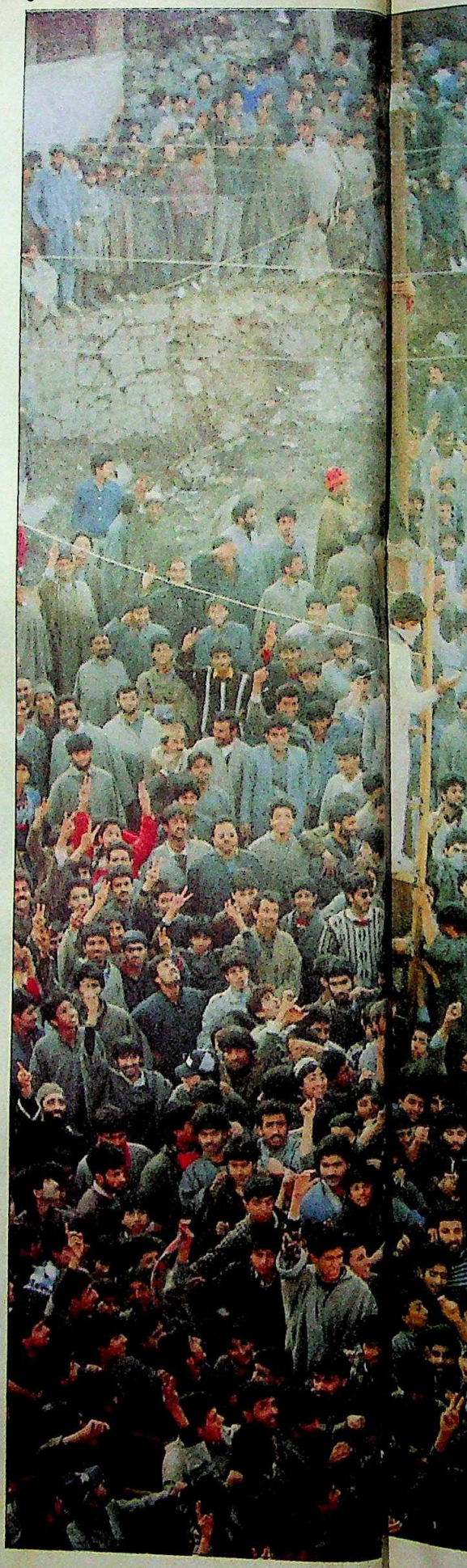
Nevertheless, it's clear that the state is fast becoming ungovernable. The director-general of police is in command of the valley. Farooq did not even visit it during the crisis. Curfew was clamped and the army called out in Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Sopore and Shopian. But despite shoot orders, a bank was looted and a Border Security Force truck bombed. In Srinagar, three government offices were bombed or burnt. Said Nisar Darzi, 29, of the city's Lal Chowk area: "We are ready for this curfew and worse. We will lay down our lives for the *Mujahedin*."

The mood is indeed militant. For two days after the release of five Jammu and

Curfew-bound Srinagar: uneasy calm

MEHRAJ-U-DIN





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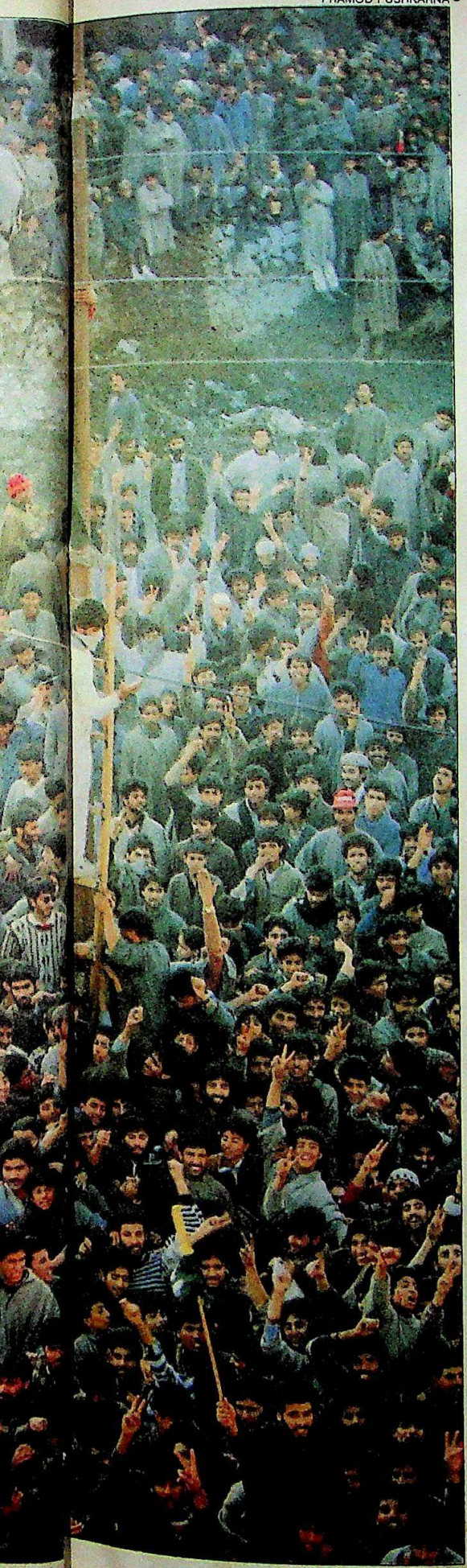
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militants in exchange for the Mufti's daughter, jubilant crowds hoisted JKLF flags and raised anti-India slogans. Seven people died in police firing. The toll reached 14 after imposition of the curfew.

The ruling National Conference leaders blamed the previous Central government and the Congress(I)—a partner in the coalition state government. Said Jammu and Kashmir Agriculture Minister Mohammad Shafi: "How can we explain the non-fulfilment of our election promises? When we fail to convince them, people naturally fall for the militants' arguments."

BUT to many, the arguments sounded hollow. Even government supporters admit that the administration accused of inefficiency and corruption has lost all credibility. Says Mohammad Shafi Pandit, the former divisional commissioner of Kashmir and now principal secretary to the chief minister: "Our challenge is not only to give a just and equitable administration. But one which is also seen to be just and equitable."

It's a difficult task. Mainstream politics is almost absent in Kashmir. Even people once sympathetic to the state administration have turned against it. Moulvi Farooq, the valley's mirwaiz (religious head), angrily waves the letter he wrote to Amnesty International which lists 47 deaths in the past year and the arrest of 50 others who were political workers of his Awami Action Committee. "This coalition government has lost every right to rule," he says. "We have reached a disastrous point of no return." At his sermons, he terms the present curfew "imposition of martial law".

The curfew has made the harsh Kashmir winter even more arduous. The trucks bringing firewood are stuck on the highways. And thanks to the frequent power-cuts, the towns wear a ghostly look at night. The tourists have fled. Local business has collapsed.

All this neatly fits into the militants' scheme. The army and paramilitary forces are termed "occupation forces". The whispers about a 'quit Kashmir movement' seven months ago have turned into an open call for an 'Azad Kashmir'. On the road to Sopore, a band of stone-wielding children stop journalists' cars. Their demand: Go back and write that we want an Azad Kashmir. When curfew is relaxed, eight-year-old Seraj scribbles 'Join KLF' and 'Maqbool Butt zindabad' on the walls of his Naidyar locality. Why? Because "everyone likes KLF". Those arrested for burning the national flag or raising inflammatory slogans are hailed. Those killed in police firings are dubbed martyrs. Most graveyards dotting Srinagar have at least one fresh grave where a "martyr" is buried.

Armed militancy—never a Kashmiri trait—is the order of the day. Encouraged by the mass support, the JKLF is coming forward for the first time with a concrete political agenda. "We are clear about what we want," its underground leader, Javed Mir, told INDIA TODAY.

The JKLF manifesto is categoric about

Celebrations after the release of JKLF men in Srinagar (left); and armed militants: growing support

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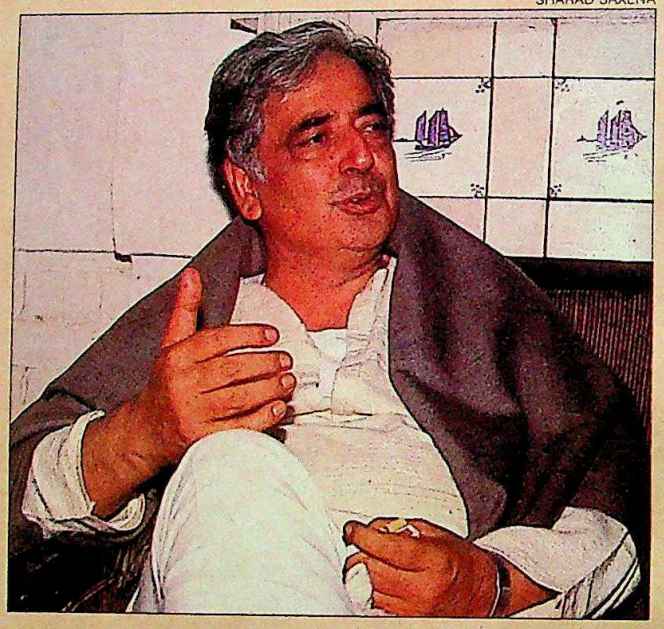
its aims: complete independence for Jammu and Kashmir; a system of "Islamic democracy"; safeguarding rights of the minorities as prescribed in the Koran and Sunnah; an economy of "Islamic socialism"; and a non-aligned foreign policy.

All over the valley, the manifesto has been discussed threadbare. Meraj Din, 35, a shop owner, demands the creation of a free port after independence: "There will be no middlemen from Delhi and Bombay." Nisar Darzi wants United Nations peace-keeping forces to be present at the first election to be held in 'Azad Kashmir'. Tariq, 23, a student of mass communication, is emphatic: "Changing state governments won't do. We want the total pull-out of the Indian Army. It's an occupation force like the Israelis in Palestine and the Russians in Afghanistan."

And it's not just talk. The militants' orders are widely obeyed. All bars and liquor shops in the valley have been closed. Cinema halls are the next target. The boycott of the Lok Sabha elections was chillingly successful. In many polling stations, not a single voter turned up. In Srinagar constituency, no one filed

SHARAD SAXENA



MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED

"The militants call the shots"

MILD and soft-spoken, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, 53, hardly fits the image of the tough home minister. But toughness is exactly what the country's first Muslim home minister will require—as he resists pressures from fundamentalists of all shades. The abduction of his daughter by Kashmiri militants shortly after he assumed office was evidence of that. For more than an hour, the Mufti fielded questions from Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA. *Excerpts:*

Q. *Hasn't your government strengthened Jammu and Kashmir extremists by releasing militants in exchange for your daughter?*

A. It was the state Government's decision. Neither I nor the Centre was in the picture when the state Cabinet decided on the release.

Q. *But two senior ministers were sent to Srinagar to facilitate the release.*

A. They went only to give moral support to the state Government. One, Inder Gujral, is a personal friend of Farooq Abdullah.

Q. *You could have advised the state Government against the compromise.*

A. The state Government had already given a commitment, not once but twice. Only the modalities for the release were to be worked out.

Q. *Don't you agree that recent developments in the state indicate that extremists rule the valley?*

A. Kashmir has been a playground for many international agencies who oppose its accession to India. But this kind of violence is new to Kashmir. It is due to the total indifference of the Centre to the state's problems during the past three years. I agree that the state machinery has collapsed and that militants are calling the shots.

Q. *Why isn't there any action by the Centre?*

A. The state has an elected National Conference-Congress(I) Government. Law and order is its responsibility. The prime minister has assured total support to it in restoring its authority. Farooq must make the Government responsive to people's demands and restore peace. And he has assured us of that.

Q. *Why are the people of Kashmir always hostile to the Government in the state? Don't they believe in the democratic process?*

A. They do. But there have never been free and fair elections in the valley. And extremists mislead the youth by arguing that since ballots have failed, they should take up bullets. This is a dangerous drift. We have to restore the credibility of Indian democracy and bring Kashmiris into the national mainstream.

Q. *Isn't Article 370 responsible for an artificial alienation from the national polity? Why don't you repeal it as demanded by the* BJP*?*

A. Article 370 is not a hindrance to the emotional integration of Kashmir with the rest of the country. It is the attitude towards them as a community that has to change. We have to follow a carrot-and-stick policy. No compromise with militants but at the same time we have to ensure genuine democratic rights.

Q. *But extending the hand of friendship failed in Punjab recently.*

A. It depends on the credibility of the leader. We failed in Punjab and Kashmir because the Centre was not serious in implementing its commitments. We have made a beginning with the prime minister's visit to Amritsar. He was planning a similar gesture in Kashmir but it was sabotaged by anti-national elements.

Q. *How will you strike a balance between talking to the extremists and simultaneously ensuring the support of the* BJP *and the* CPI(M) *which favour a harsher line?*

A. We are against compromising with the integrity of the nation. But no one is opposed to finding an amicable solution through dialogue.

Q. *Will you be able to solve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute by negotiations?*

A. I think the prime minister has an action plan which will unfold soon.

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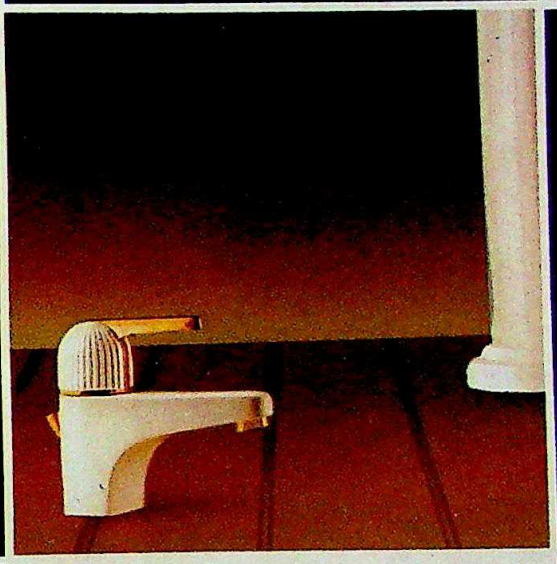

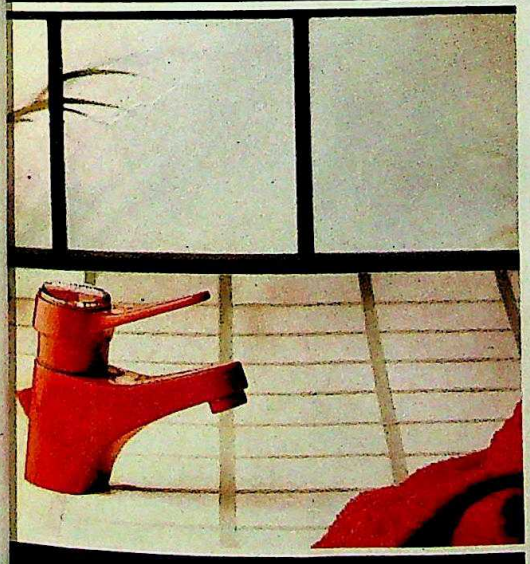

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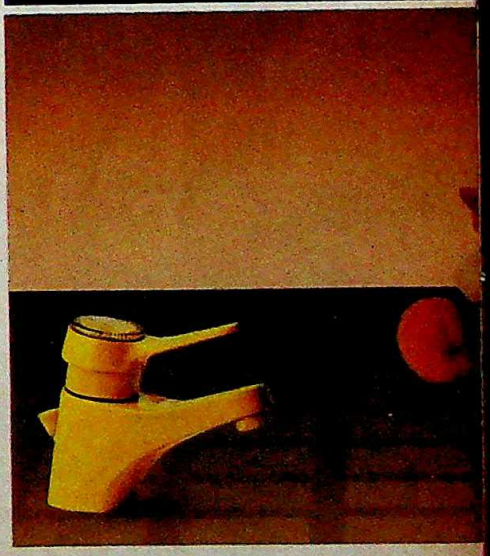

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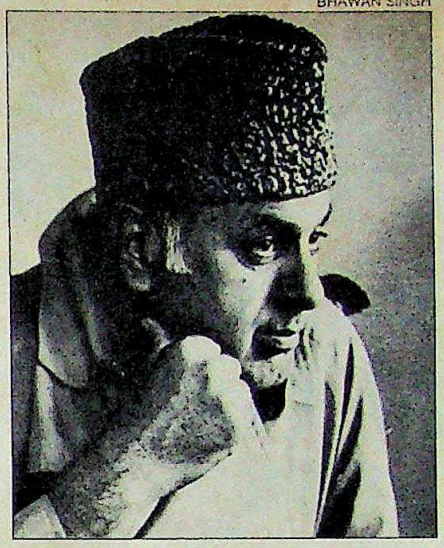
nominations after a bomb ripped apart the jeep of Rasheed Kabuli, former minister and candidate of the Democratic Forum. Says Kabuli: "Distrust of democratic institutions is complete today. If the Centre wants to take an initiative, it has to first demonstrate its sincerity. To begin with, I suggest a general amnesty."

But the state Government—given a free hand and support by the Centre—is in no mood to forgive. In flushing out operations, it arrested more than 400 people from the curfew-bound areas. Senior officials justify the crackdown, arguing that more than 50 Kalashnikovs, over a thousand pistols and revolvers and about 200 kg of explosives were recovered from militants in the past year. But if the administration was expecting these measures to break the backbone of militancy, it seemed that it was achieving quite the opposite. The exaggerated reports of deaths and police excesses increased the bitterness against the Government. Asked Moulvi Farooq: "If the masses are with the militants, whom is the army protecting? If they are against the Government, shouldn't the Government go?"

BHAWAN SINGH



Farooq Abdullah: out of sorts

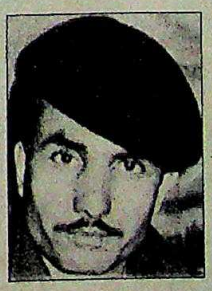
The crackdown has had another detrimental effect: fundamentalist groups which are not pro-Pakistan have also gone underground. The Islamic Students League is one such group. Its chairman, Shakeel Bakhshi, who was leading processions until last month, is now holed out on the outskirts of Srinagar. Unlike JKLF extremists, he is not averse to a dialogue with the Centre. But the crackdown on his workers is changing that mood. Said he: "It will be difficult for me to stop my cadres who have been tortured by the police. They might answer force with force."

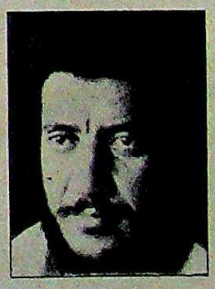
If that happens, the fine line separating fundamentalists from separatists, and moderates from fundamentalists will have been erased. And the Government will have no one to blame but itself.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI and ZAFAR MERAJ in Srinagar

MILITANCY

Harvest of Hatred





(Clockwise from left) Abdul Shahi; Javed Mir; Shakeel Bakshi; Inquilabi

THE story goes that when the former ruler of Kashmir, Raja Hari Singh, raised an army battalion entirely from Kashmiri stock, the first task assigned to it was to march from Srinagar to Jammu. The commandant reported that his men were all set to march except for one thing—they wanted police protection en route.

That image was an accurate one. The docile and smiling Kashmiri had always feared authority and shunned violence. Today, that has changed. Years of neglect by manoeuvring politicians and aid from Pakistan have fostered a dozen-odd militant secessionist groups—from the well-oiled Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) with a concrete agenda to the fundamentalist Allah Tigers which bombs video parlours and bars.

Leading the pack is the JKLF floated in 1965 in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir by Pakistani intelligence agencies. Its present chairman, Amanullah Khan, has never lived in Kashmir; he operates from Rawalpindi. One of the first Kashmiris from the Indian side to join the JKLF was Maqbool Butt in the early '70s. Hanged in 1984 for killing a policeman, he is now revered as a martyr. The top JKLF leader is Azam Inquilabi, a former teacher believed to be the link between the organisation's Pakistan-based headquarters and its Kashmir branch. Javed Mir, the JKLF spokesman, is also a powerful leader.

Another organisation with mass support is the People's League. Its leader, Shabir Shah, now in jail, has won a wide following by his fiery speeches. In an interview to INDIA TODAY in April, he said: "I don't favour terrorism, but I want to create an atmosphere where the Indian Government will be unable to practise repressive measures in Kashmir." The fact that the JKLF did not demand his release in exchange for Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's daughter is a pointer to differences among the groups.

Newer groups like the Jan Baaz Commandos, Al Fateh, Allah Tigers, Al Maqbool Mujahedin and Dukhtran-e-Millat (daughters of the nation) hardly have a coherent ideology. But the common thread linking them all is the demand for independence and a call to arms. Says Shakeel Bakhshi, chairman of the Islamic Students League: "When it comes to the crunch, we will bury our differences."

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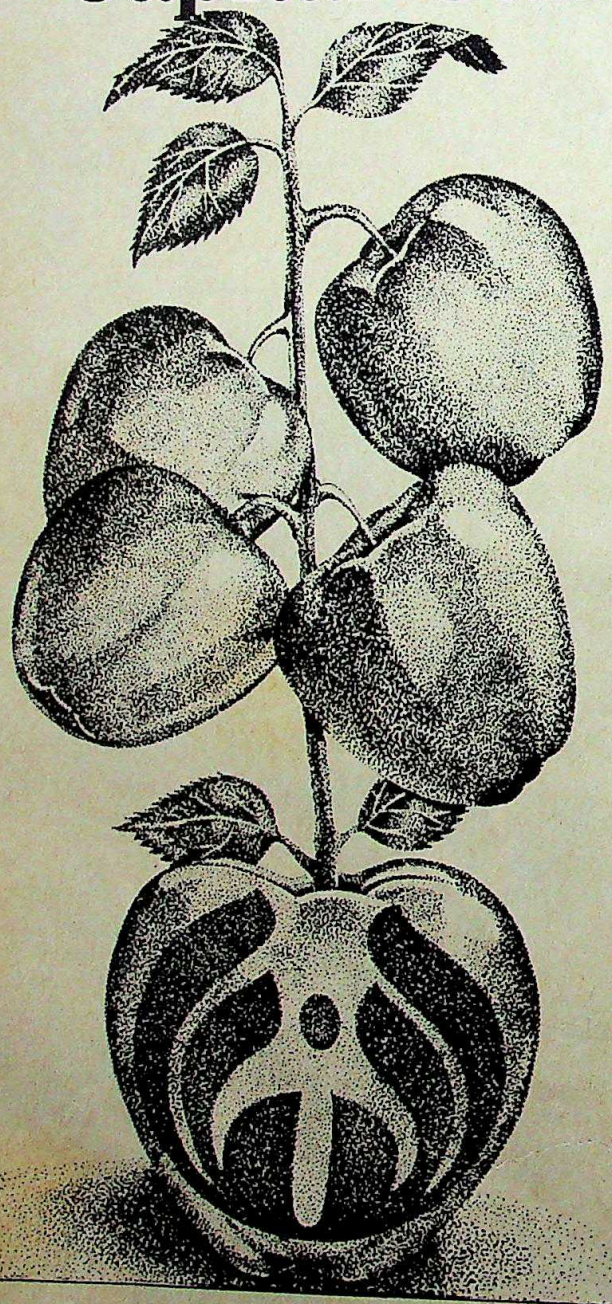

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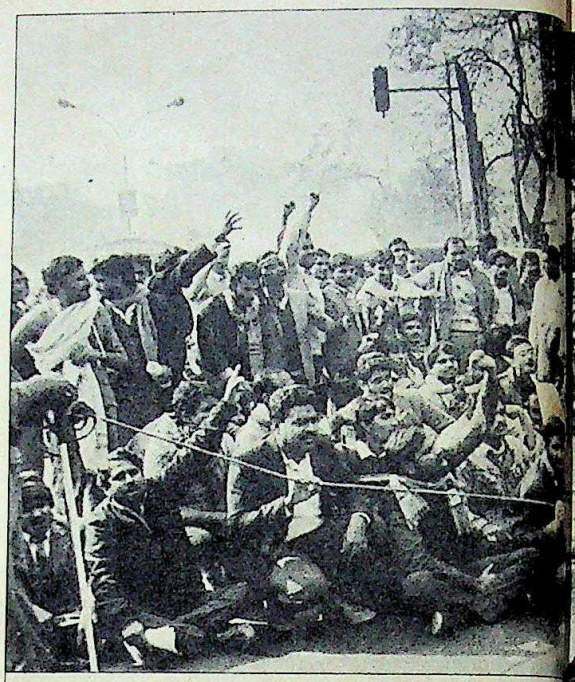
ANTI-RESERVATION STIR

Spreading Tentacles

What began as a minor protest in Uttar Pradesh has spread to several other states reflecting widespread opposition to the Government's policy of reservations.



The stir, which has led to signs of a violent confrontation among various caste groups, has a dangerous capacity to unsettle the new state Government and the chief minister.

THE cardinal principle for surviving in the rough and tumble of Uttar Pradesh politics is: never sit back and savour power. The lesson was driven home to Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav last fortnight even before he could find time to go back to his constituents in Etawah to say 'thank you'.

Within a week of taking charge, he was faced with his first challenge in the form of an innocuous looking agitation against job reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Snowballing into a major statewide stir, it threatened to engulf the entire country and become a major headache for the Centre.

The agitation affected 52 of Uttar Pradesh's 62 districts, consuming railway property worth over Rs 12 lakh as well as 350 vehicles in mob violence in the state. So far, the agitators have shown no signs of relenting—and the movement threatens more trouble and more loss of life and property. Also, like tremors radiating outwards from the epicentre of a quake, reverberations of the agitation were rocking not only the neighbouring states of Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, but also Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The protests were sparked off by a news item reporting the 62nd Constitution Amendment Bill, which extends reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Anglo-Indian candidates in Parliament and state legislatures for another 10 years.

On December 8, a small group of students in Allahabad started shouting slogans against Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Chief Minister Yadav. At first, the stir was restricted to the university, forcing it to close. But by noon, the crowds swelled and blocked the Grand Trunk Road, burning effigies and stoning vehicles.

From December 11, the hot line at the Home Department's control room kept buzzing as reports of violent agitations started pouring in from various towns of eastern Uttar Pradesh, including Varanasi and Gorakhpur. By December 15, the agitation had spread to 32 towns in Uttar Pradesh. And by December 22, the agitation had made its presence felt in 52 districts of the state with those in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh especially affected. Till now, the agitation has claimed four lives in different cases of police firing. And hardly a train from the state ran on schedule due to blockades on rail tracks by anti-reservationists.

The state Government has done little to ease the situation. In fact, the police seems to be going about its job with an obvious word of caution from the Government. Despite the intensity of the agitation, they have made only 300 arrests till now. And they resorted to firing in Jaunpur, Faizabad, Mathura, Gorakhpur and Meerut only in extreme situations.

With the anti-reservation agitation spreading to other parts of the country, students of Jammu University boycotted classes against reservations and a procession was organised by the youth in Puri in Orissa. In Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, mobs tried to set ablaze public buildings and property while bandhs were sponsored in Bhind and Gwalior.

Similarly, in Bihar, large-scale violence erupted when bandhs sponsored by adamant anti-reservationists disrupted rail and bus services in Chhapra and Patna. Students in Rajasthan took to the street in several universities and blocked traffic. In Jaipur, the police resorted to lathi-charge and teargas to quell violent students. The agitation also spread throughout Andhra Pradesh when students boycotted classes in West Godavari and Krishna districts. The police arrested more than 200 students in Hyderabad when they obstructed traffic and deflated tyres of buses.

The agitation was partly caused by a misunderstanding: an impression was created that the new Government was making special provisions for reservations in the matter of jobs. In fact, the bill—which triggered off the present controversy—was concerned with seats in Parliament and state legislatures. Many in the Janata Dal see the agitation as politically motivated and designed to help the Congress(I) in the states where assembly elections are due in a couple of months. During heated discussions in Parliament on the issue last fortnight, the Congress(I) predictably exploited the Janata Dal's discomfiture.

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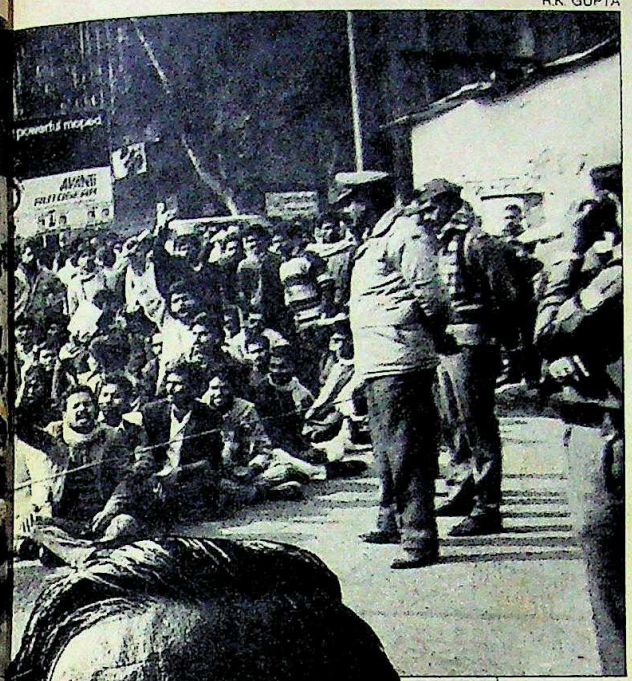

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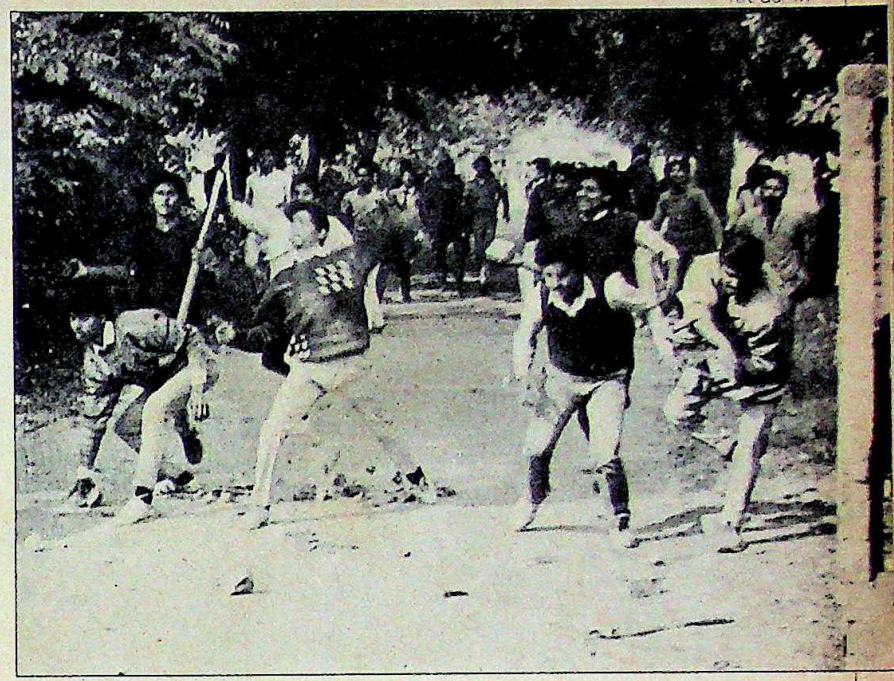

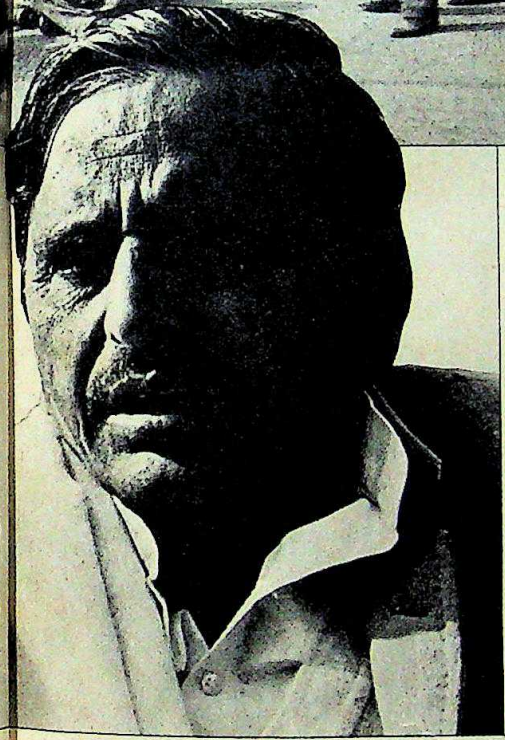

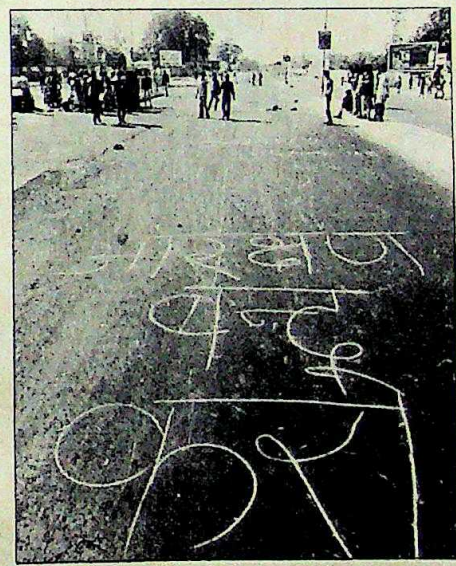

(Clockwise from left) Slogan on a street in Jaipur; Yadav; in Lucknow, traffic blockade; and protesters throwing stones

While introducing the bill in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister for Labour and Welfare Ram Vilas Paswan clarified that the idea was not to extend job reservations since, in any case, they were not time-bound. The bill was only trying to extend the reservation in the legislatures, which expire in January 1990. Although, most accepted the bill in principle, the Congress(I) members protested angrily when Paswan hinted that some were inciting the anti-reservation stir.

The present stir, which has already led to signs of a confrontation among various caste groups, has a dangerous capacity to unsettle the new Government. The position of the present Janata Dal Government is especially peculiar as the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations is one of the ruling party's election promises.

The commission's major recommendation is a 27-per cent increase in reservation for the backward classes, beyond the existing 18 per cent. But, if this recommendation is implemented in Uttar Pradesh, the total reservation for backward classes would cross the 60-per cent mark, exceeding the legal limit of 50 per cent. This is in direct conflict with the agitationists' demand that reservation should have an economic rather than a caste basis.

SAYS former Uttar Pradesh chief minister N.D. Tiwari: "This agitation mainly stems from the Janata Dal's failure to take a clear stand on the Mandal Commission's recommendations." However, Janata Dal leaders dismiss this as a mere eyewash since the Congress(I) had itself openly extended job reservations just a year back. "Why were there no agitations then?" they ask.

Though the new chief minister has avoided directly accusing the Congress(I) of fanning the agitation, the resolution at the state Janata Dal meeting presided over by him, was a sufficient pointer to the party's thinking. It said: "Those who have been ousted from power in the recent elections are behind this agitation."

But the Congress(I) vehemently protests against the charge. Says UPCC(I) General Secretary Ramesh Dixit: "The Janata Dal is blaming the Congress(I) because the party does not have the guts to blame the BJP." The BJP, on the other hand, claims that it is firmly committed to a caste-based reservation system and accuses the Congress(I) of having instigated the anti-reservation agitation.

The only evidence of the Congress(I)'s involvement in this agitation, however, seems to be the prominent role played by some student leaders who are members of the NSUI, the student wing of the Congress(I).

Refuting allegations of the Congress(I)'s involvement in the agitation, Tiwari points out: "Are we backing this agitation in Congress(I)-ruled states like Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh too?" However, reports that some Congress(I) leaders like former ministers Jagadambika Pal in Basti, Pramod Tewari and Ashok Bajpai in Allahabad were acting in league with the anti-reservationists are much more difficult to brush off lightly.

Yadav has repeatedly been announcing that his government would not back out from its commitment to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations.

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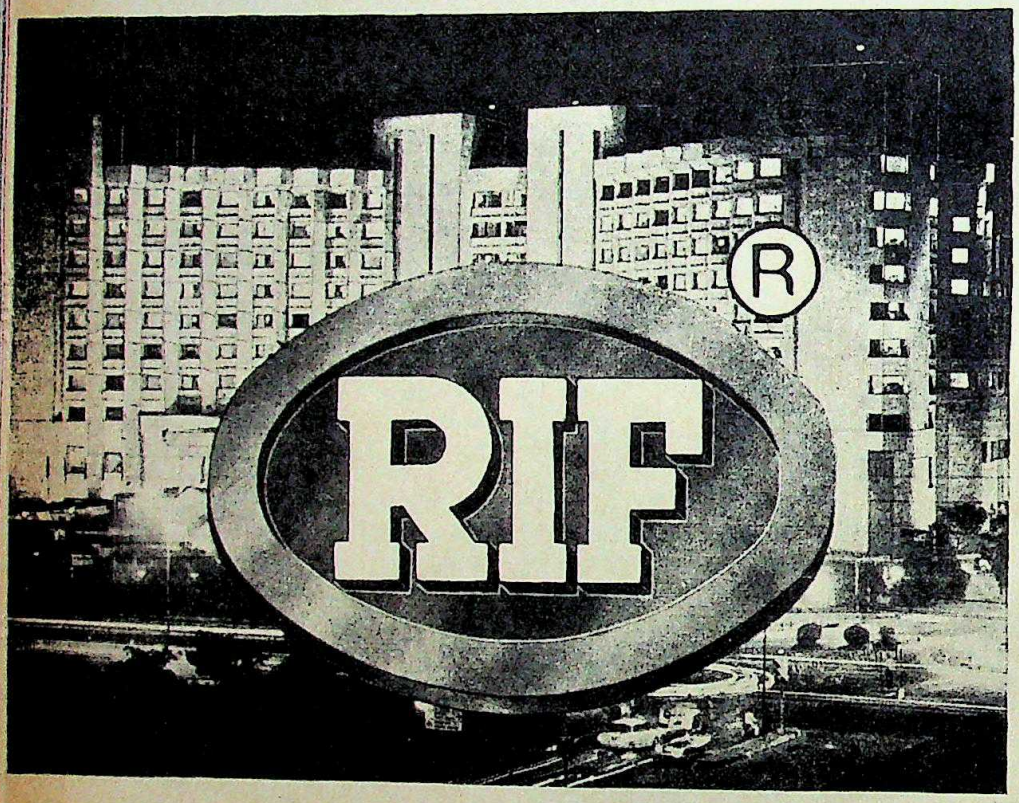

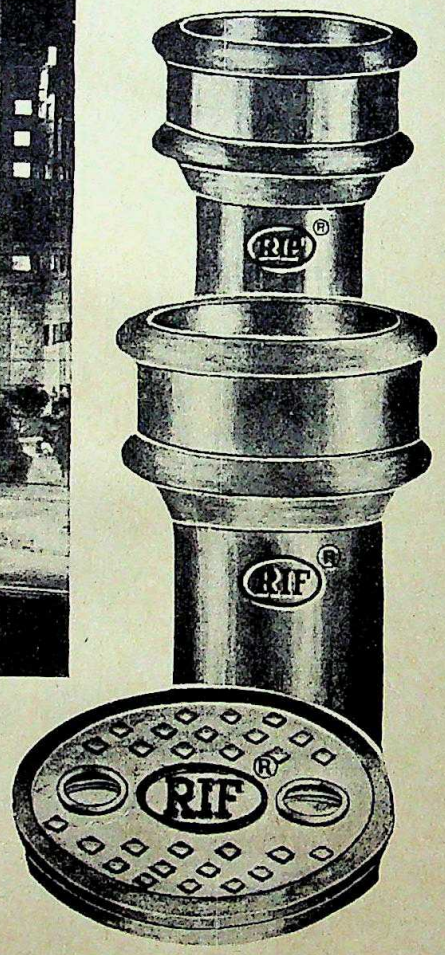

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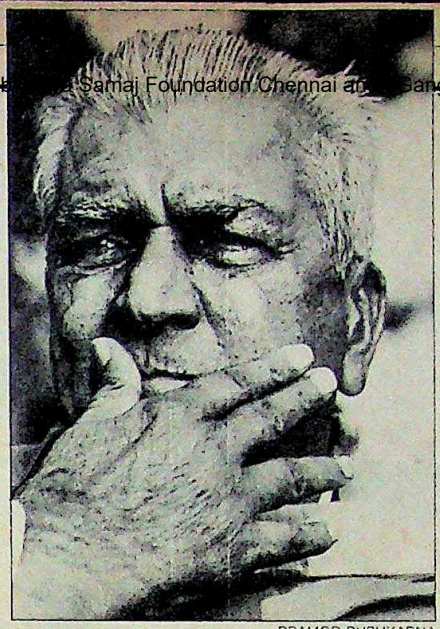
Many feel that Yadav has placed himself in an awkward position by doing so—a case of committing too much and too soon.

Initially, Yadav took a tough stand saying that the Government would make no compromises on the existing reservation policy. In fact, he categorically stated that it would also implement the commission's recommendations. On December 19, he went further to say that if the agitation did not die out within two days, the Government would resort to the use of force. But, with the agitation assuming threatening proportions, he changed his stand to announce during a public reception on December 21 at Etawah, that the state Government would consider the question of giving reservation to other classes on an economic basis.

What seems most problematic at the moment is the confusion within the Janata Dal on the policy on reservation.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Devi Lal: policy confusion

With typical recklessness, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal declared openly that he supported a system of reservation on an economic basis. Soon after, the chief minister stated that this was Devi Lal's opinion—implying that it was not necessarily his view too.

As of now, one of the major problems from the Government's point of view is that the agitation is almost leaderless at the state level. There are only local leaders operating at the town level. So, the question of a dialogue with the agitationists is unlikely at this moment.

Meanwhile, the agitation continues to grow and threatens to turn more violent. The most dangerous outcome could be clashes between various caste groups. And if that happens, even the best of Mulayam Singh Yadav may not be enough to counter this agitation. For then, its tentacles will reach all over the nation and might very well hold the Centre to ransom. —DILIP AWASTHI

INDIAN EXPRESS

Stop Press

THE ironies piled up like a stack of newspapers rolling off the press. What the might of a vindictive Rajiv Gandhi regime could not achieve in three years, was done by the management of the *Indian Express* last fortnight. It shut down its Delhi edition after the 750-member staff went on an indefinite strike demanding implementation of the Bachawat Wage Board's recommendations and other employee benefits.

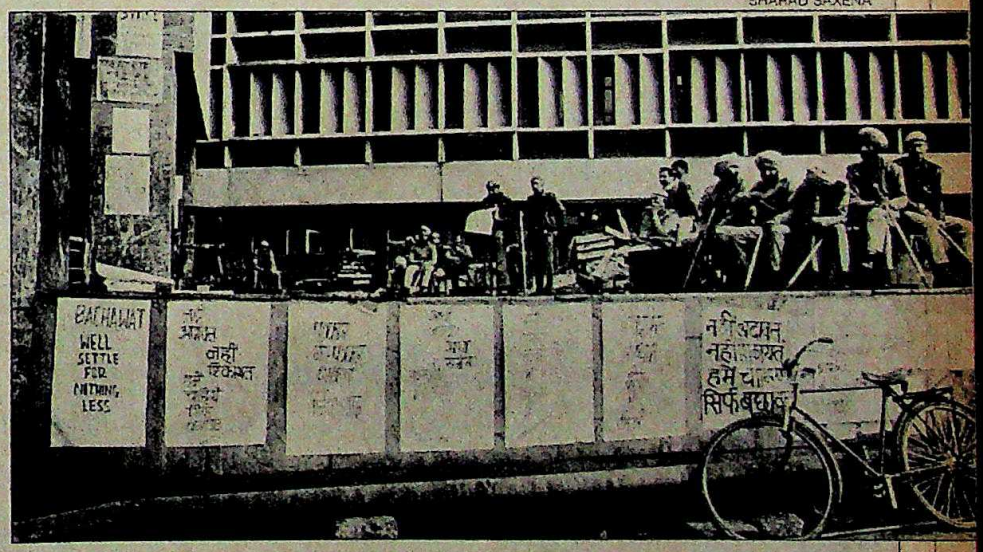
The action shifted from the noisy *Express* newsroom to Delhi's Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg. Reporters sat on the steps singing *"We shall overcome one day"* instead of writing incisive, investigative stories—a hallmark of the newspaper. Their vitriolic pens—ever anti-establishment—turned against the *Express* empire. Two slogans: "Our hearts beat for Bachawat; while their money beeps in Bombay" and "Of what avail, the campaign trails; the front page edits, if Bachawat fails".

The ironies did not stop there. Many leaders of the Janata Dal, whose political battles were fought in the *Express* columns, supported the striking workers. Doordarshan, which had ignored the newspaper's travails for years, now gave wide coverage to the agitation. The management whispered that it was the handiwork of their enemies who were still in the Government.

A deadlock prevailed as both the union and the management stuck to their guns. The workers drew the support of almost all organisations of journalists. Said Indian Express Employees' Union General Secretary Madan Talwar: "The lock-out is illegal. They are denying us our just rights." *Express* financial adviser S. Gurumurthy, on the other hand, argued that meeting the employees' demands will render the group economically unviable. Said he: "We are already running an annual loss of Rs4 crore. The wage board implementation will mean a bill of Rs 2 crore more. We will be sunk."

According to the wage board, the management has to pay its employees by taking the group revenue as the base. This means that the Delhi edition and other low-category editions would fall in category one. Gurumurthy complains that under the new method, the difference in the employees' salaries in the Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat editions will be considerable. Though many news establishments have already implemented the wage board award, major groups, like the *Times of India*, are irked by this recommendation.

SHARAD SAXENA



Slogans at Express building

Much to the *Express* management's discomfiture, Labour Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has affirmed the Government's commitment to implementing Bachawat's recommendations. The ultimate irony will be if the newspaper turns against the new rulers for which it so tenaciously fought in the past. —PANKAJ PACHAURI

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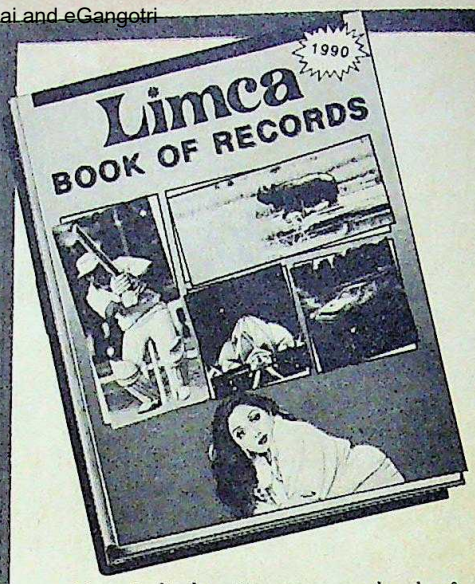

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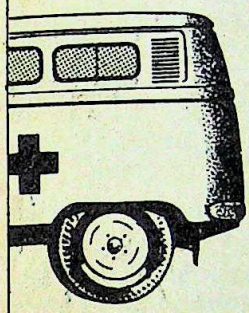

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BHAWAN SINGH

Bimal Jalan, V.P. Singh and Vinod Pande: personal equations

BUREAUCRACY

The Gentle Slash

The new Government is busy transferring those identified with the last regime. But this is being done with finesse, to ensure it doesn't smack of vindictiveness.

THE bureaucracy has an evergreen phrase for it: wielding the sugar-coated dagger. Last fortnight, as the National Front Government at the Centre went about making changes at key levels in the bureaucracy, it was evident that the old weapon was again in play. V.P. Singh's strategy was clear: to achieve a clear-cut change but with finesse, and at a dignified pace without seeming vindictive.

Many of Rajiv Gandhi's favourite bureaucrats, who were expected to be axed, got marching orders. But for the present, they were being accommodated with sinecures, not dumped in the way the Janata government did in 1977 and Indira Gandhi did, on her return to power in 1980.

Still, for all the tact, the Government left no one in doubt about its intentions. In a sweeping series of appointments and transfers, more than a score of changes were made at the highest levels of the bureaucracy. One in every three secretaries was replaced, most of them in crucial departments—cabinet secretariat, home, finance, industry, commerce, information and broadcasting, revenue.

And though the transfers and appointments came in bits and pieces over a period of weeks, they clearly followed an identifiable pattern.

► Bureaucrats who had identified themselves closely with the previous regime and ruling party were the first to get the axe.

► Those victimised by the Rajiv government were rehabilitated.

► Some bureaucrats who are known to have favoured a particular Bombay business house were replaced.

► Finally, non-controversial bureaucrats known for their integrity, and expected to help the Government in unearthing the scandals of the previous government, were appointed to important positions.

> **While the changes were tactful, they virtually amounted to a clean sweep with all key ministries seeing new secretaries.**

Among the most important of the bureaucrats close to Rajiv to fall were T.N. Seshan, cabinet secretary; G.K. Arora, finance secretary; and Kalyankrishnan, home secretary. Seshan was regarded as one of Rajiv's principal hatchetmen in the bureaucracy and had masterminded the Government offensive to counter the Opposition-sponsored Bharat Bandh last August. Arora was a key Rajiv aide on many issues, including Bofors.

But in a bid to convey its good intentions to the bureaucracy, the Government did not summarily dump them. All three were moved to relatively cosy abodes. Seshan was made member of the Planning Commission. Arora got a plum posting—as executive director at the

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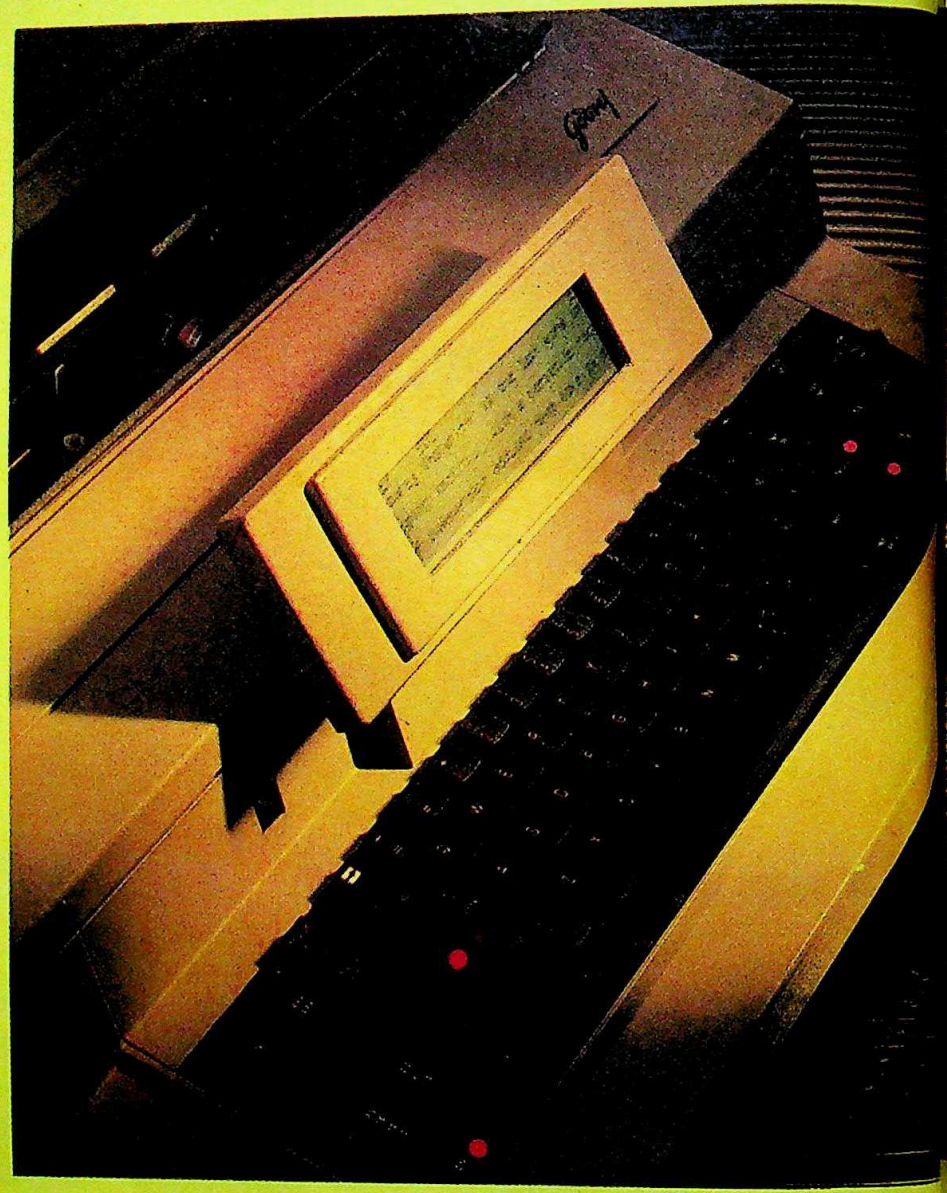

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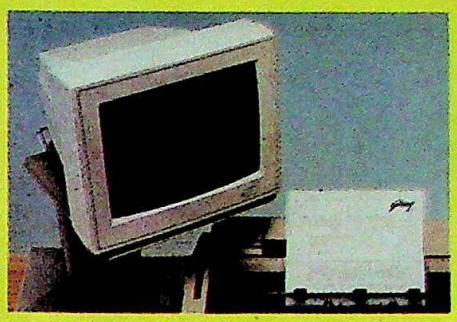
your typist cannot spell 'harassed' or 'embarrassed', no mistakes appear. **Video monitor**  Displays upto 25 lines on the full screen monitor. Powerful software governs the display outputs, making editing so much easier and faster. **Local area linking** All Starwriters can be interlinked at nominal cost. So just one spell check or floppy drive can be used by 3 or even 15 typists. Optimising resource utilisation and transfer of information. Starwriters can also type in two languages. And be linked to an electronic telex module. And so much more.

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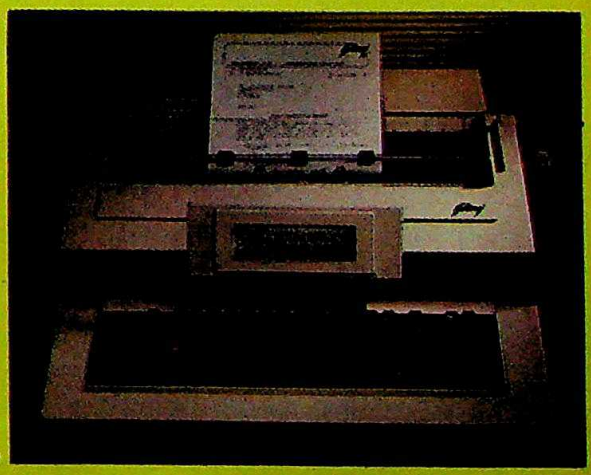

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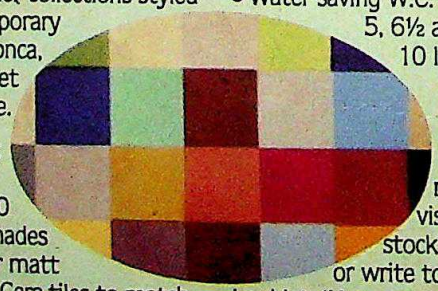

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International Monetary Fund. Kalyankrishnan, due to retire this April, was made member of the Union Public Service Commission with five years to go.

Romesh Bhandari, the high-profile lieutenant-governor of Delhi, was transferred to the Andamans but declined the posting, handing in his resignation instead. Bhupinder Singh and I.P. Hazarika, chairmen of the State Trading Corporation and the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, were removed from their posts.

Two secretaries—Nitish K. Sengupta, revenue, and H.K. Khan, petroleum and natural gas—were moved out because they were seen as having unduly favoured a business house in Bombay.

Several Rajiv appointees, including his political aide R.K. Dhawan, and five members of the Planning Commission tendered their resignations without waiting for marching orders.

Other appointments were more in the nature of corrections. A.S. Thind, who had been appointed chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes at the personal instance of Rajiv Gandhi and Satish Sharma, was replaced by T.N. Pandey, the man he had superseded. Bhaskar Ghose, whose tenure as director-general of Doordarshan saw the small screen's brief dalliance with glasnost and who was subsequently shunted out unceremoniously, was brought in as additional secretary in the I&B Ministry. Vinod Pande and Bhure Lal, who as lieutenants of V.P. Singh in the Finance Ministry had been responsible for the campaign against economic offenders, were rehabilitated after three years in obscurity. Bhure Lal joined the Prime Minister's Office as a joint secretary and Pande, who had been languishing in the Rural Development Ministry, was appointed cabinet secretary.

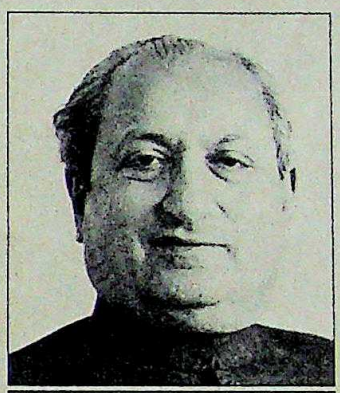
Along with these rehabilitative appointments, the Government also gave important positions to civil servants known for their integrity. Principal among them is Shiromani Sharma who has been pitchforked from the confines of Uttar Pradesh, where he was the chief secretary, onto centre-stage as Union home secretary. Two others in the same category are R.L. Mishra, who moves from the relatively insignificant Textiles Ministry to become revenue secretary, and M.D. Godbole, an officer of the Maharashtra cadre, who takes over as petroleum and natural gas secretary.

WHILE none of the bureaucratic appointments could be described as political, the same could hardly be said of three non-bureaucrats: Soli Sorabjee who became attorney general, and L.C. Jain, Magsaysay Award-winning Gandhian economist, and Rajni Kothari, noted political scientist, who joined the Planning Commission. All three are well-known Congress(I) critics. Jain was, in fact, the campaign manager for Rajmohan Gandhi in Amethi during the Lok Sabha elections.

Nevertheless, in making the changes, the Government was eager to appear fair and not vindictive. So, while Seshan and Arora were moved, no immediate decision was taken on B.G. Deshmukh, principal secretary to the prime minister. The Government was also relatively tolerant towards many senior officials whose appointments have been controversial. Justice M.P. Thakkar, who as one of the two members of the Thakkar-Natarajan Commission on the Fairfax investigation had indicted V.P. Singh, continues to head the law commission—so far. Similarly, the two new election commissioners, S.S. Dhanoa and V. Seigell—appointed on the eve of the announcement of the general elections—are still in office.

The signals to the bureaucracy seemed to have evoked the necessary results. Many civil servants, who had been complaining that the bureaucracy was being politicised, felt that errant officials had only got their just desserts. Said a senior bureaucrat in North Block: "Those of us who overstepped the limits

GOPI ARORA


ROMESH BHANDARI

BHUPINDER SINGH

I.P. HAZARIKA

T.N. SESHAN

N.K. SENGUPTA

Most bureaucrats close to Rajiv got marching orders, but in a bid to prove its good intentions, the Government provided several with sinecures.

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knew the consequences very well."

In fact, with the initial fears of a vacuum-cleaning proving unfounded, several key political appointees of the previous regime stuck on, hoping to sell their services to the new Government. One is Sam Pitroda, head of the country's Telecom Commission. Despite being humiliated by Communications Minister K.P. Unnikrishnan, he was trying hard to forge peace with the new rulers.

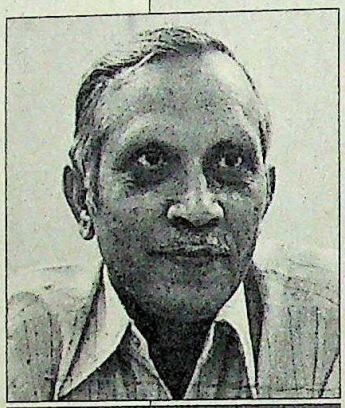
Nevertheless, V.P. Singh came under criticism, charged with appointing bureaucrats with whom he has a personal equation, for example, Bhure Lal and Vinod Pande. Bimal Jalan, the new finance secretary who comes in from an assignment at the International Monetary Fund, had also worked under V.P. Singh in the Finance Ministry. Nevertheless, the criticism was largely muted. Defending the Government, CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee said: "Ministers should appoint those bureaucrats in whom they have total confidence."

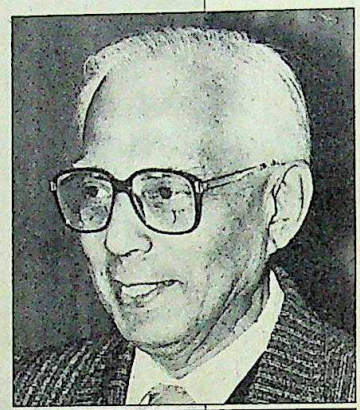
Indeed, ministers seem to have been given a free hand in making appointments in their own ministries. Claims Dinesh Goswamy, minister for steel and mines with additional charge of law: "We are not to look for approval or guidelines from above. The message is: you are supposed to do your job."

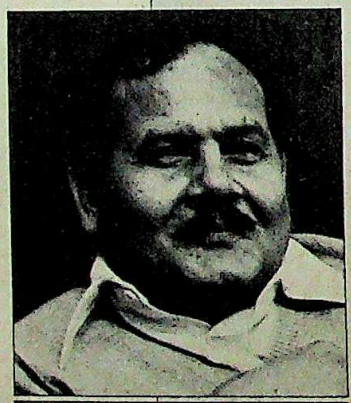
But while there's been no pressure from the Prime Minister's Office, there's been hectic lobbying. Harsh Vardhan, the controversial Vayudoot managing director, who is known to be close to former home minister Buta Singh, flew in film actor Shatrughan Sinha to push his case. Sinha, who had campaigned full-time for the Opposition, also argued in favour of retaining K.L. Verma as enforcement director.

Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal lobbied for several of his nominees. He managed to get Harswaroop Singh inducted as Planning Commission member and got S.K. Mishra, former civil aviation secretary, transferred as agriculture secretary. Mishra had worked under Devi Lal in Haryana and should be of help in at least partially implementing the Janata Dal's generous promises to the farmers.

But despite the caution with which the Government has made changes until now, shake-ups in some sensitive departments seem inevitable. Several heads are rumoured to be on the block. M.K. Narayanan, chief of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), whose exit had been expected, has already been replaced by R.P. Joshi, an IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre known for his competence and integrity. There had been widespread and often credible allegations of the IB being reduced to a political tool of the previous government under Narayanan. Janata Dal leaders had complained that he had employed the IB to prepare a list of prospective Congress(I) candidates for the Lok Sabha elections.


SHIROMANI SHARMA


NIRMAL MUKHERJEE


BHURE LAL

BHASKAR GHOSE

Integrity and personal equations were major factors in V.P. Singh's choice of officials.

The country's apex foreign intelligence-gathering organisation, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), at present headed by A.K. Verma, might also see a change at the top. In recent times, it has been accused of fomenting the Bodo agitation in Assam and of tailing Arun Nehru when he visited the US a few months ago. One person being talked of as a successor to Verma is Gouri Shankar Vajpayee, a senior RAW officer.

While the overhauling of the bureaucracy is far from complete, the initial changes are a foretaste of the shape the final edifice will take. In the cabinet secretariat, Pande will provide a sharp contrast to the overbearing Seshan. The capital's press corps fondly remembers the bachelor from his days as revenue secretary when he followed a strikingly informal style of functioning. There is likely to be more openness, with bureaucrats becoming more accessible to the media. The Uttar Pradesh cadre, sidelined for long, could gain in influence. And the overwhelming position of the Prime Minister's Office is likely to go with V.P. Singh eager to pare down the trappings and grandeur of the Rajiv days.

There could be several gubernatorial changes too. S.S. Ray's replacement by Nirmal Mukherjee as Punjab governor was perhaps the most inevitable one. The Government is said to be toying with the idea of implementing some of the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations on Centre-state relations, including those on the appointment of governors. If it does, the first to go would be Congress(I) politicians and former bureaucrats like S.K. Bhatnagar in Sikkim, Ram Dulari Sinha in Kerala, Serla Grewal in Madhya Pradesh and Kumudben Joshi in Andhra Pradesh, who were appointed by Rajiv for their personal loyalty to him.

For the present, the Government's policy seems to be to make haste slowly. And if it sends the right signals to the bureaucracy which, of late, was increasingly permitting itself to be used by politicians, it would certainly mean a change for the better.

—BHASKAR ROY

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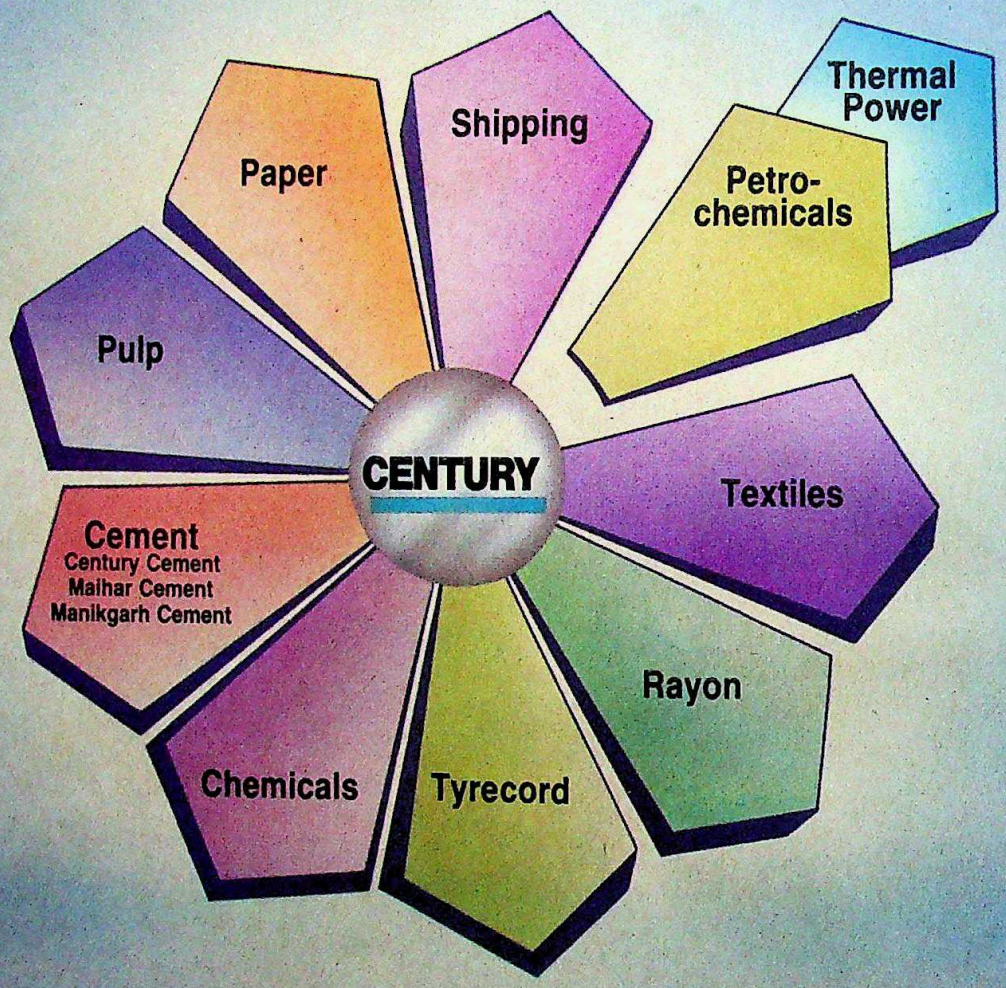

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

An impatient generation sought violent solutions but there were signs that democracy might yet deliver.

"Violence is not our way of life. It is foreign to us and we want to keep it away from us.
INDIRA GANDHI, 1981"

A TUMULTUOUS

IN flashback, the images that dominated the decade seem dangerously daunting. The assassination of a prime minister and spreading terrorism. The holocaust in Bhopal and the babies butchered at Nellie. The decline of a dynasty that ruled independent India for almost 38 of its 42 years and the story of whose fortunes reads like a compendium of the decade. The arrival of a minority government and the debilitating stranglehold of communalism and rising cynicism. For India, the '80s proved nothing less than an ordeal by fire.

In totality, it was a roiling, rumbustious decade, an era of dramatic change and challenges, severely testing Indian democracy. Separatism and internal strife turned the '80s into the Decade of the Gun and an impatient generation often succumbed to the temptation of seeking short-term solutions through violence rather than wait for the slower democratic process to deliver. Armed with a brute majority, the ruling party allowed Parliament to degenerate into a society of abuse and the political leadership became increasingly

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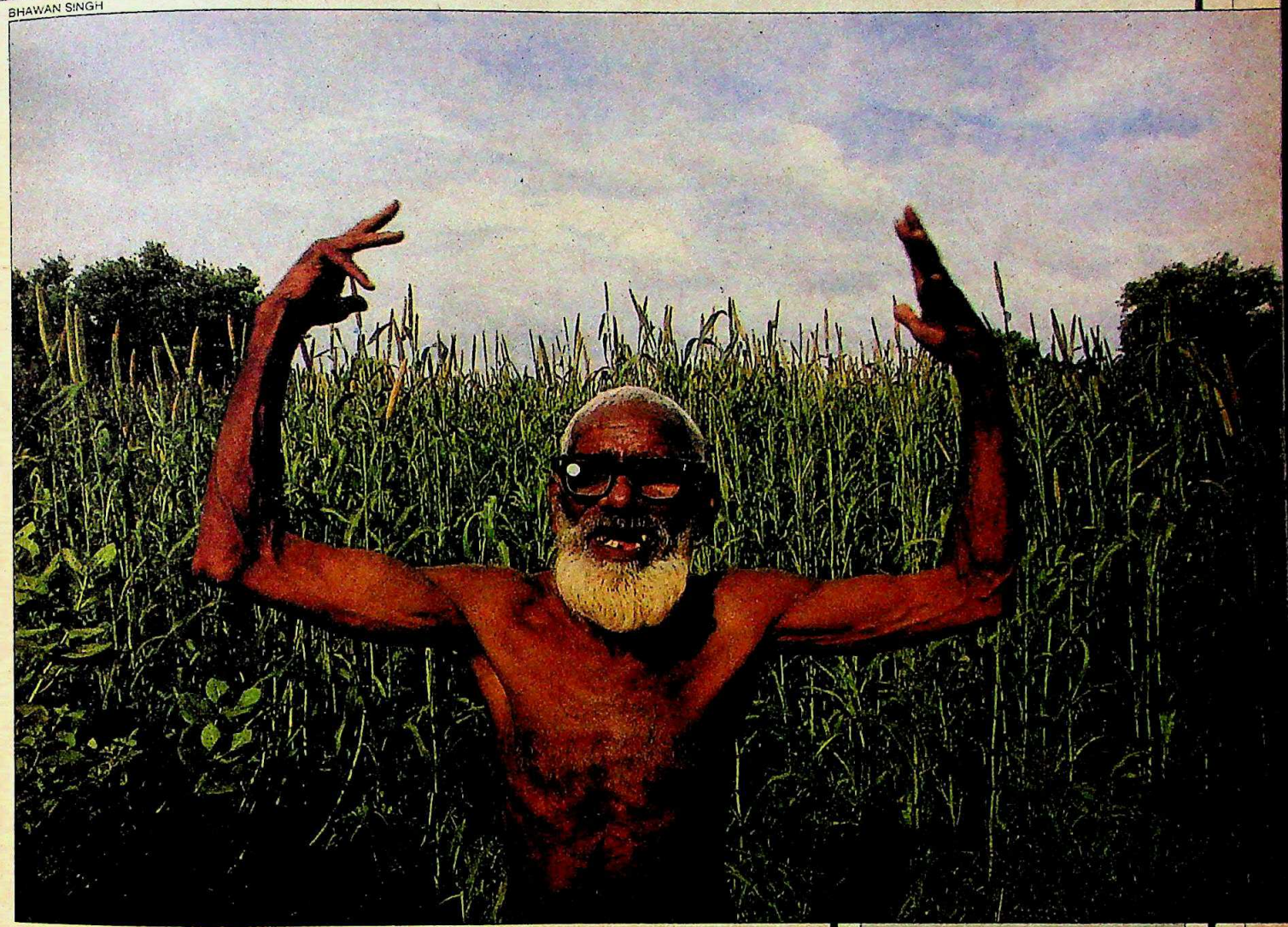
BHAWAN SINGH



TURNING POINT

isolated from the people behind an iron curtain of security.

On a collective canvas, the events that shaped the decade were of tumultuous significance. Mrs Gandhi's triumphant return to power in 1980 was overshadowed by the death of her son, Sanjay, in an acrobatic air crash. But the legacy left behind by his ruthless, combative brand of politics survived.

The sinister figure of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, himself a creature of politicians, brought terrorism frighteningly alive. His death, in the rubble of the Akal Takht, may have ended one bloody chapter but it also heralded the start of another, perhaps even bloodier one. Punjab-related killings, including the '84 Delhi riots, reached the grim total of over 10,000 during the decade. But as the curtain came down in the '80s, indications were that the flexibility inherent in a democratic polity could finally emerge victorious. The extremist group led by Simranjeet Singh Mann not only contested elections, but also took oath of allegiance to the Constitution raising hopes of conciliation.

The common man was the decade's hero, defying poverty and guiding India through three governments.

"I don't know much about politics."
RAJIV GANDHI, 1984

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BHAWAN SINGH

Rising fundamentalism added a dangerous dimension to Indian society's inherent tensions and contradictions.

"I would be a disaster as a prime minister."
V.P. SINGH, 1988

In retrospect, no other decade in independent India has been as violent and divisive. Assam; Operation Bluestar and its aftermath; the blowing up of an Air-India Boeing with 329 passengers aboard; the Bhagalpur blindings and caste killings in Bihar; the 1,200 Indian soldiers killed in Sri Lanka and, even more ominous, the naked face of communalism, of which rising Hindu revivalism was a new dimension. The decade was tragic witness to some 4,500 communal incidents that cost around 7,000 lives. Looming menacingly over the scene was the divisive Ram Janmabhoomi issue, now grown into an ominous monster for the new government India elected at decade-end.

AND, if the '80s did usher in the Day of the Gun, it was entirely fitting that the decade's biggest scandal should have also involved one. The Bofors Howitzer deal and its attendant miasma of kickbacks and high-level cover-ups snowballed into a national obsession and finally became the new buzzword for corruption. But it also had a positive discharge: a lesson to politicians that the Indian voter may be poor or illiterate. But he cannot be taken for granted.

That was, in essence, the true message of the decade: that India seemed to have finally found maturity. Though overshadowed by crises, the decade had enough highs to inspire optimism. The economy

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

entered a new era of dynamism. The stock-markets boomed like never before and industrial growth finally broke through its 'Hindu-rate-of-growth' barrier. Liberalisation begat aggressive competition and brave new entrepreneurs. The most visible sign of the times was the rise of the middle class which became a dominant economic and political force. The consumer explosion took place, symbolised by the vast urban landscape crawling with Marutis.

India catapulted into the exclusive space club, launching her own satellites, even as Rakesh Sharma made a historic space flight, and major advances took place in rocketry and intermediate range missiles. India also took the century's worst drought in its stride.

In most areas of human endeavour, India displayed exceptional ingenuity and advancement. The art world was transformed into a seller's market, and in films and music, the beat was, well, upbeat, echoing the energy and drive in Indian society.

Yet the star of the decade was the anonymous voter who guided India through three changes of government, displaying a sagacity that has been his hallmark and ensuring that in spite of its shattering violence the decade closed with a new phase where a government's very survival depended on generous accommodation. A sign that augured well for the '90s.

—DILIP BOBB

India's consumer boom was symbolised by a vast urban landscape crawling with Marutis.

"The wounds in the people's hearts cannot be stitched with bayonets."
V.P. SINGH, 1989

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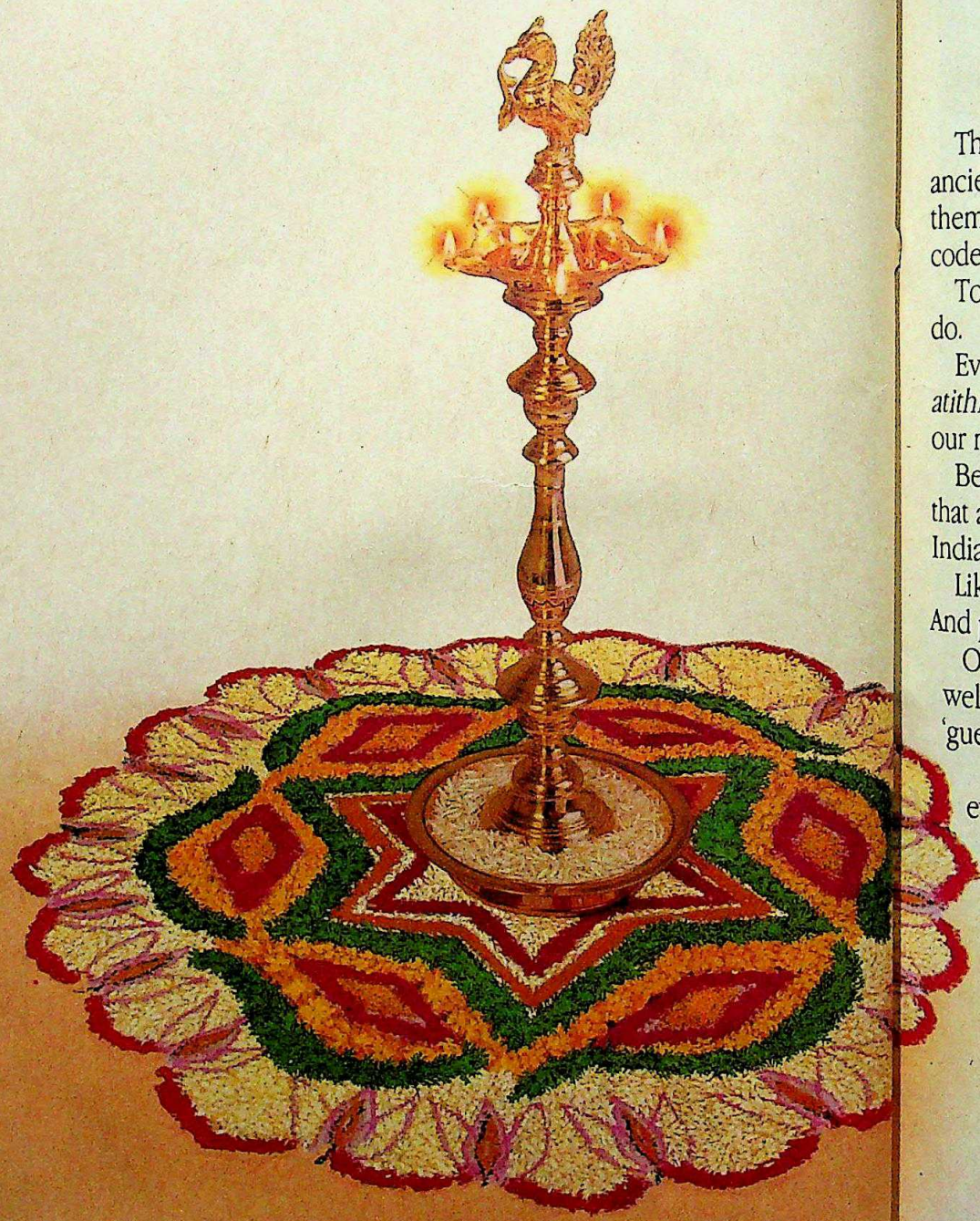
अतिथि देवोभव



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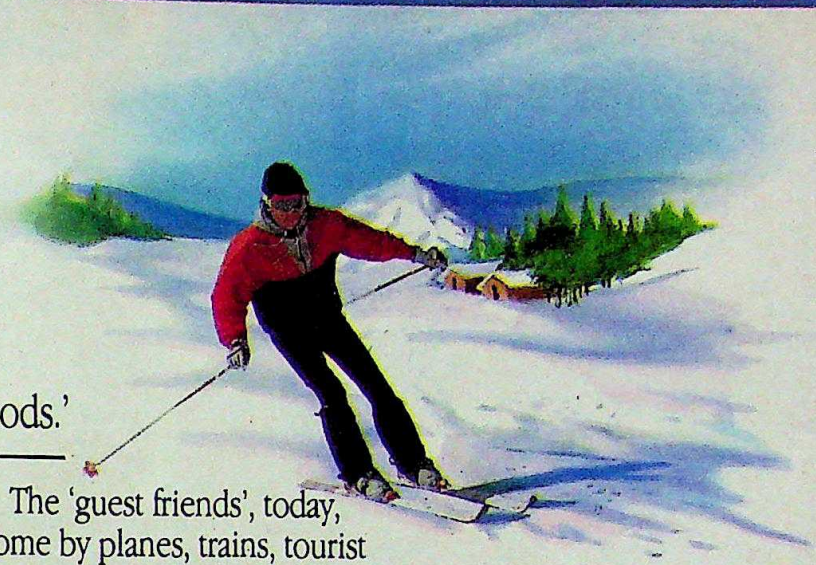

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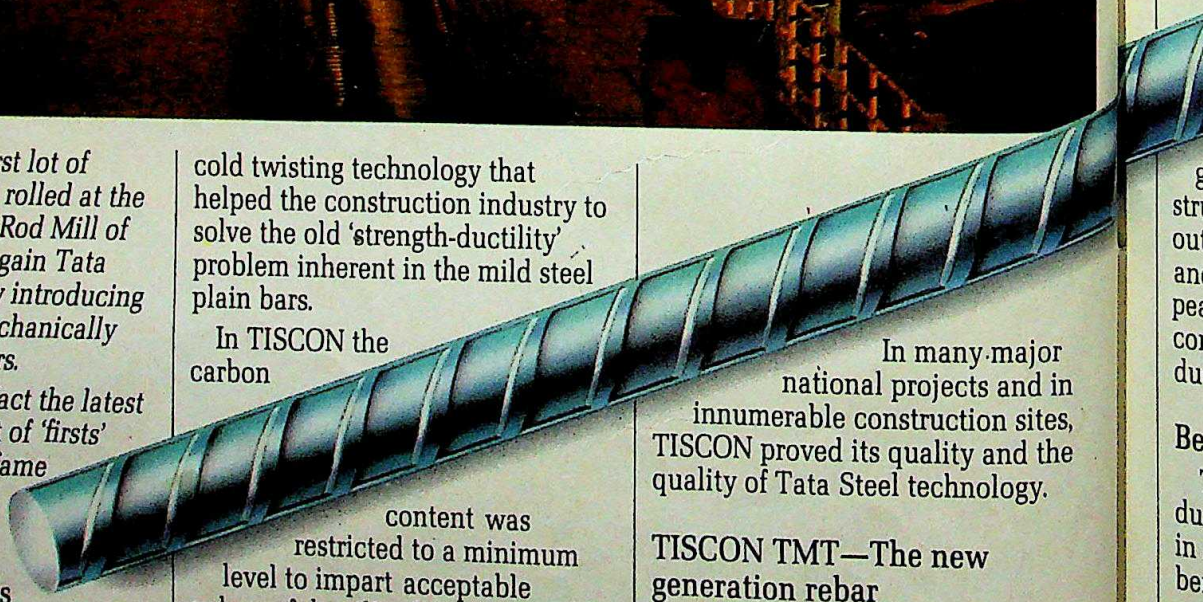

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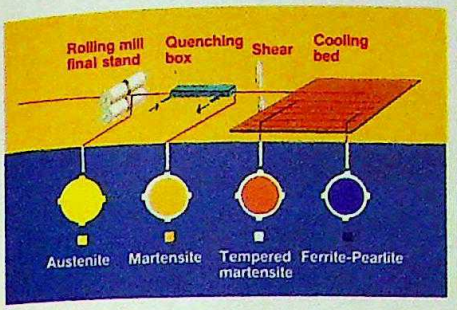
Claim



stronger foothold. Produced by the world's most advanced technology—the 'Tempcore Process'—introduced in India for the first time by Tata Steel under licence from Centre de Recherches Metallurgiques (CRM), Belgium, TISCON TMT offers a unique package of benefits.

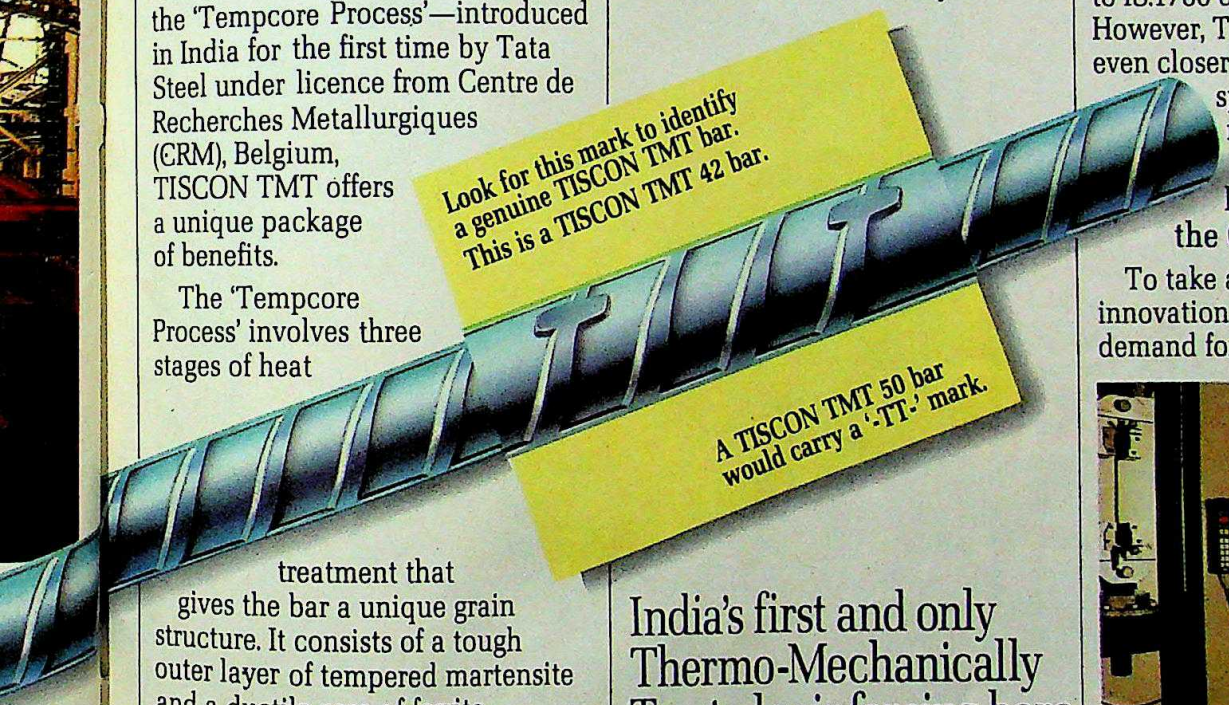
The 'Tempcore Process' involves three stages of heat treatment that gives the bar a unique grain structure. It consists of a tough outer layer of tempered martensite and a ductile core of ferrite-pearlite ensuring an excellent combination of strength and ductility.

Better bending and rebending

The tough outer surface and ductile core of TISCON TMT result in a rebar with excellent values of bendability. The bar can be bent and rebent around very small mandrels, offering obvious advantages at construction sites.

Superior weldability

Owing to its low carbon content and low carbon equivalent, TISCON TMT has a weldability which is superior to conventional cold twisted bars. It can be butt-welded or lap-welded using ordinary rutile coated electrodes of matching strength. In manual arc welding no pre-warming or post-heat treatment is necessary.



India's first and only Thermo-Mechanically Treated reinforcing bars based on TEMPCORE technology.

TISCON TMT

Improved corrosion-resistant characteristics

TISCON TMT has no torsional stresses and therefore offers superior corrosion-resistant characteristics compared with conventional cold twisted bars.

Closer dimensional tolerances

TISCON TMT bars are certified to IS:1786 dimensional tolerances. However, Tata Steel can supply even closer tolerances than the specification, wherever necessary.

Fame and Claim and the Genuine TMT

To take advantage of this new innovation and the growing demand for it, some people are

claiming to have produced TMT bars. What they can at best match is the outer appearance and never the intrinsic quality. Because only Tata Steel has access to the Tempcore knowhow. To make sure that you get genuine TMT every time, Tata Steel has put a special 'TT' mark on every TISCON TMT 42 bar and a '-TT-' mark on every TISCON TMT 50 bar.

The more challenging the assignment, the more complete

TATA STEEL

The first and still the foremost

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Crisis, Conflict, Change

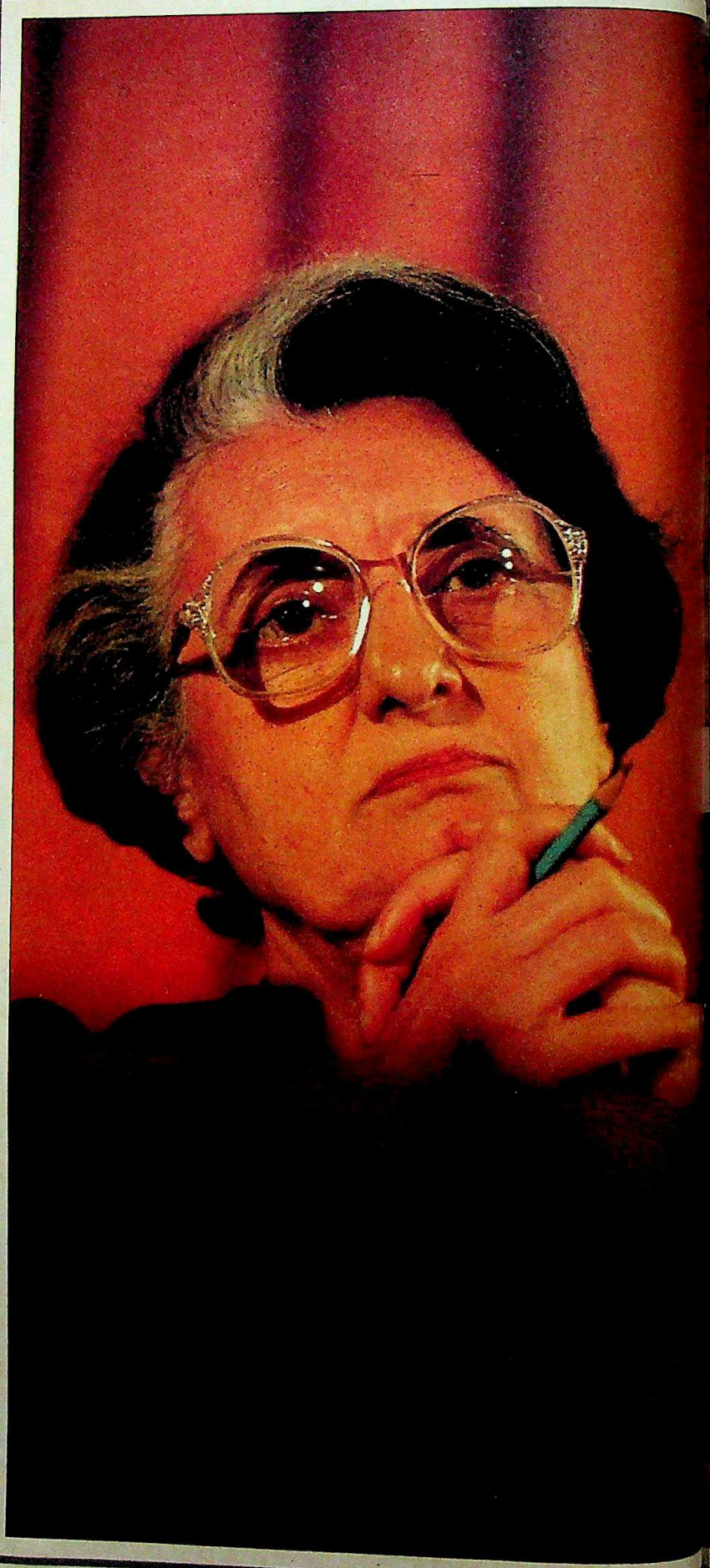
The politics of communalism, corruption and separatism dominates an eventful decade

POLITICALLY, if the '60s were fraught with uncertainty, and the '70s punctuated with turbulence, then the '80s saw cataclysmic upheaval on a scale never before witnessed in independent India's history. Change followed change, and challenge followed challenge in a cataract of political conflict, chaos and confusion that threatened to put the democratic and secular identity of the Indian state on the edge of a precipice.

The '80s were 10 long years when the Congress(I)'s writ ran large in the offices of power. But they were also years when the grip and authority of the Centre over the country's several constituents steadily weakened. And though the grip was not loosened altogether, the spectre, that the Centre may not hold, was one that faced Indians time and again as the politics of separatism, terrorism, communalism and corruption flourished, putting the entire political fabric under a strain never felt before. And amid the rubble that littered the country's political wasteland lay the old era of the one-party one-leader rule.

Fittingly, both the beginning and end of the decade were snatches played on the same theme song. Soon after Mrs Gandhi returned triumphantly on a chilly January morning of 1980, to reclaim her position at the heart of things, her monolithic party had begun to wobble as state after state either rejected it at the hustings or threatened to severe itself from the Union. At decade-end, a new era seemed to have been ushered in, yet even the new dawn under V.P. Singh presented a Centre that his detractors urged was vulnerable, a Centre that perhaps "cannot hold".

The '70s may have seen the Congress receive a body-blow—as the Janata Party swept to power in 1977—but it was in the '80s that the termites of indiscipline, corruption, and sycophancy finally began to hollow the party's political edifice with dangerous consequences. Evidence was provided by its electoral performance in the decade: 350 seats in 1980, 401 in 1984, and in 1989, Rajiv Gandhi holding the reins of an out-of-power party, the number of



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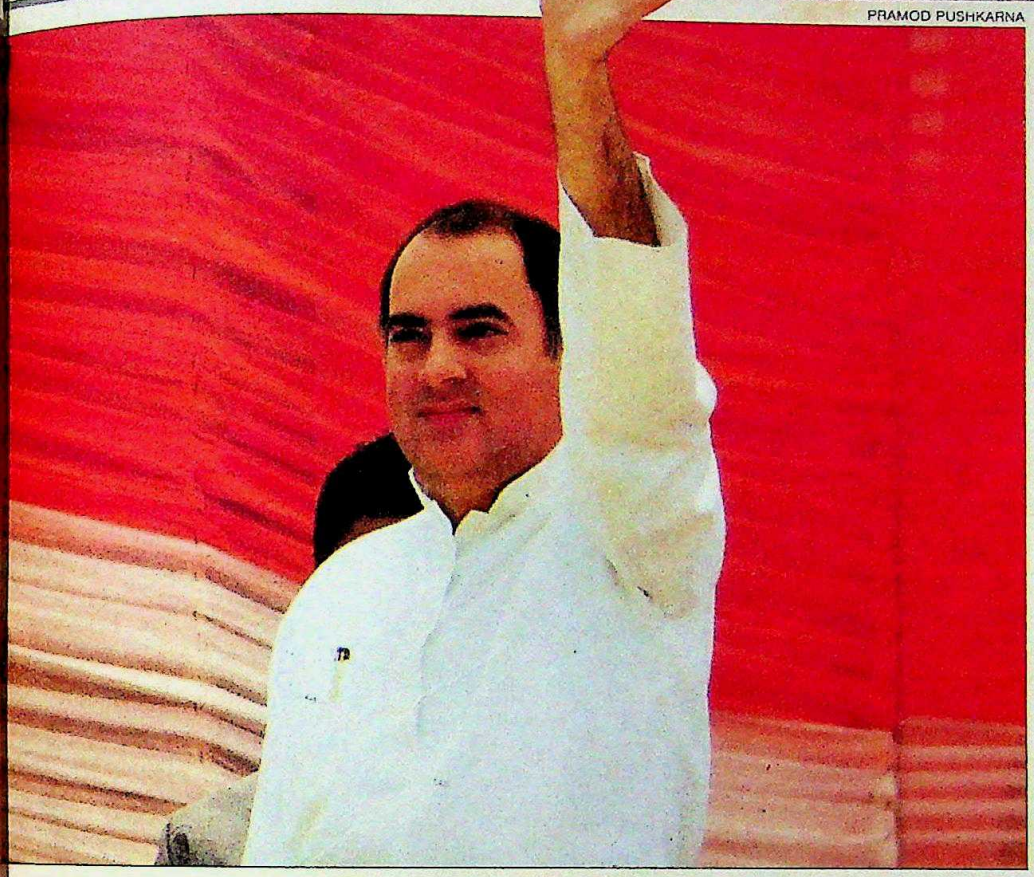
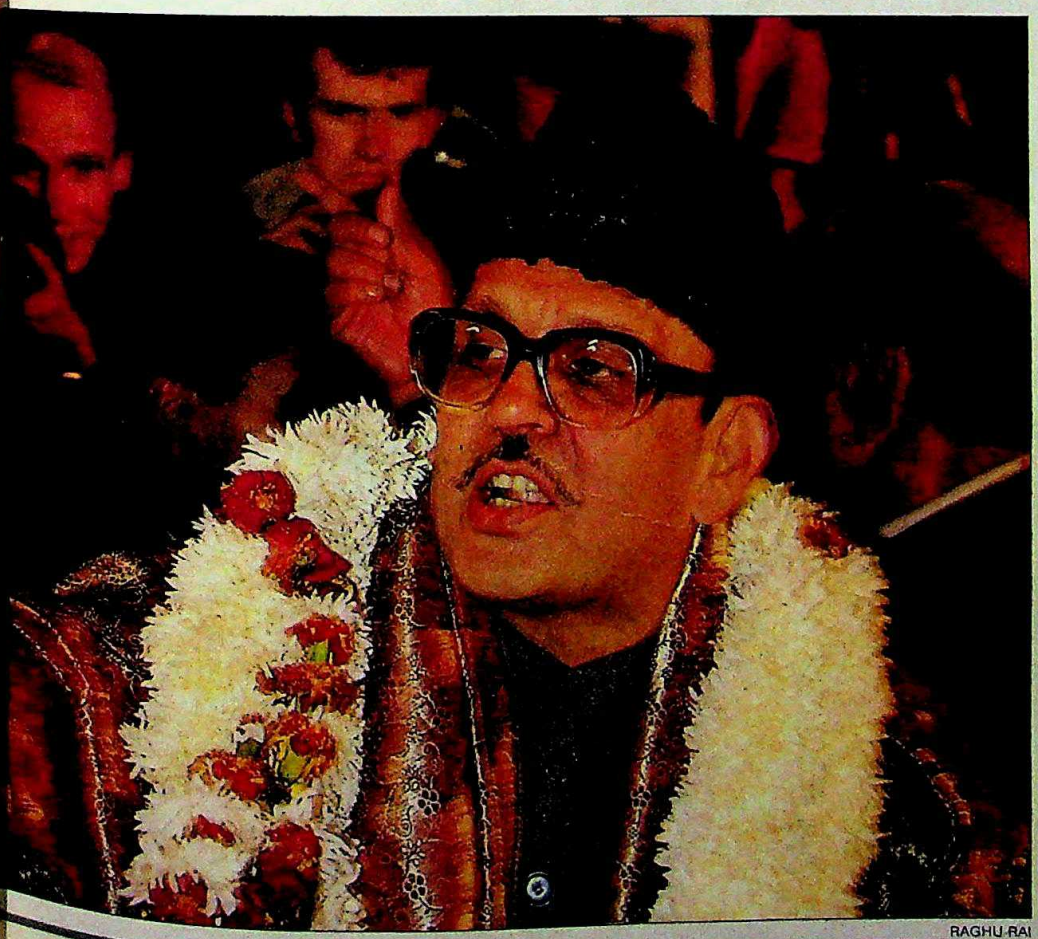


Like a star-crossed pair, Rajiv Gandhi and Vishwanath Pratap Singh played out the political theatre of the latter half of the '80s, jousting to seize advantage at every turn.



RAGHU RAI

If Rajiv Gandhi was a creation of the tragic happenings of the decade, V.P. Singh was its discovery. Ironically, both came to power hailed as Mr Clean.

"People's expectations are scary.
RAJIV GANDHI, 1985

It was Rajiv's election. He was candidate, campaigner, and the elected.
V.P. SINGH, 1985

I see no difference between V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. We want an alternative, not a substitute.
CHANDRA SHEKHAR, 1988"

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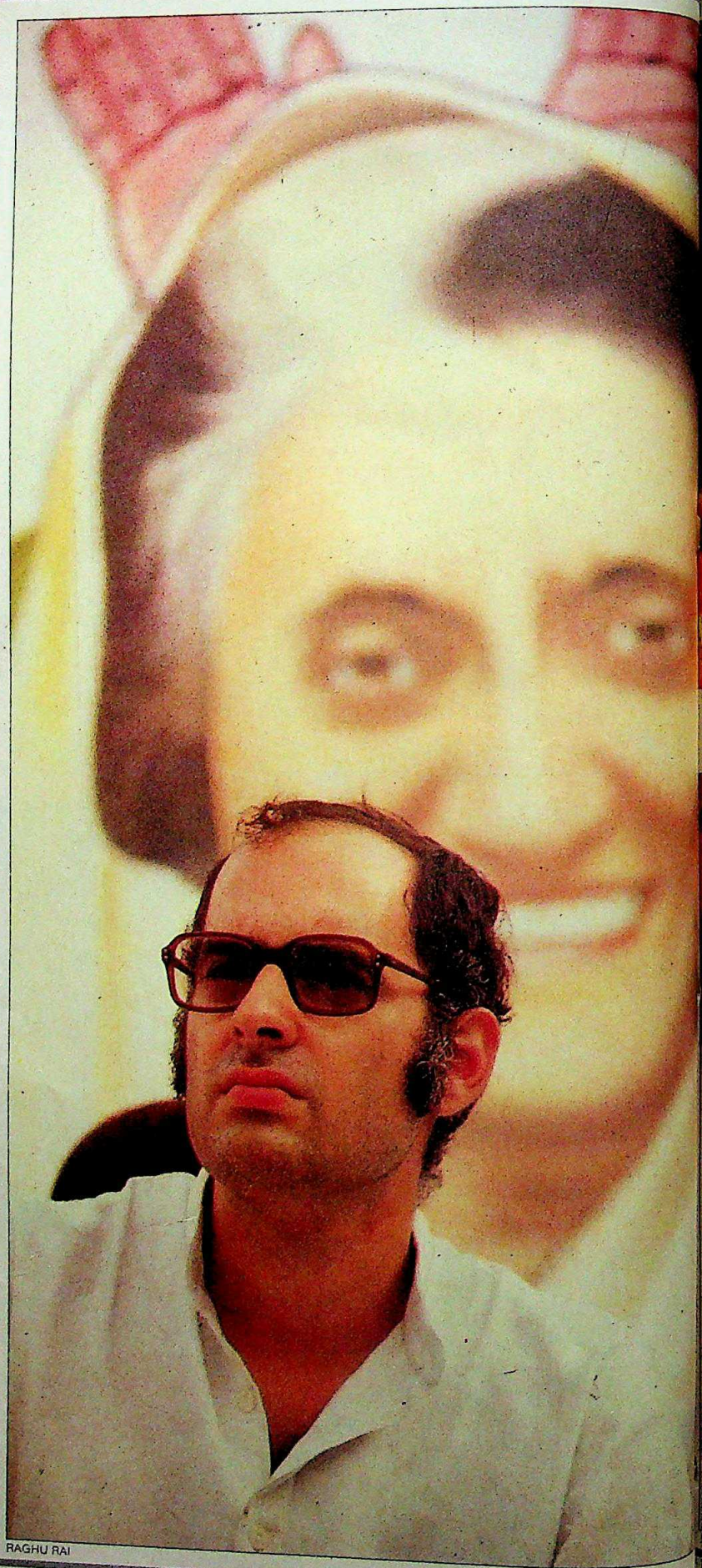
whose members totalled just 193 in the Lok Sabha. As for the National Front, which spiritedly bore the nation into the '90s: far from being the repository of absolute power, it balanced itself on the precarious edge of a strange alliance, constantly plagued, the Congress(I) swears, by the prospect of infant mortality.

In more ways than one, the '80s proved to be a decade of political ironies. Those considered to be the mighty were tragically gunned down; those believed to be invincible were trounced at the hustings. National parties lost their national character; regional parties lost command of their regions even as they began to dominate the Centre. Mr Cleans of Indian politics were tarred with allegations; powerbrokers, once denounced and discarded, returned to rule; the votaries of change, responsible for speeding the country into the 21st century metamorphosed into feudal plenipotentiaries. Accords rapidly degenerated into bloody discords; and bullets began to produce as many leaders as the ballot.

As the curtain was rung down on the decade, it was clear that for most of its duration one dictum had held sway: that power flows through the barrel of the gun. Yet, there was one factor that even overshadowed this. The gun may have provided serious distractions on the country's landscape but sweeping, overwhelming change was repeatedly wrought by the ballot. It was the almighty vote that reduced a national party to a regional one, that gave the comeuppance to all who deserved, and that purposefully catapulted a minority coalition, for the first time since Independence, to the seat of power at the Centre.

The '80s produced its quota of unique political patterns. Like the '60s and the '70s, it gave the nation three prime ministers—Mrs Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh, interestingly, each receiving a 'vote for change'. Significantly, for the first time a scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family failed to win an election for the second time running. Unlike his mother and grandfather, Rajiv who was presented the prime ministership by his party on a platter could win only one election, and that too primarily on the emotive issue of Mrs Gandhi's assassination.

It was Rajiv's fall from public grace that comprised, perhaps, the most telling political story of the decade. The untimely death of Sanjay Gandhi catapulted Rajiv from an Indian Airlines cockpit into the prime ministerial entourage, only to "help mummy". And then later, it was Mrs Gandhi's assassination that saw him leapfrog into the nation's most powerful chair. Responding to Rajiv's youthful image and clarion call for clean politics, the country gave him such an electoral verdict as was never earned by even his illustrious grandfather. For the voter, Rajiv symbolised the solidity of the past and the exhilarating promise of the future; represented both change and continuity. And Rajiv started on a buoyant note, signing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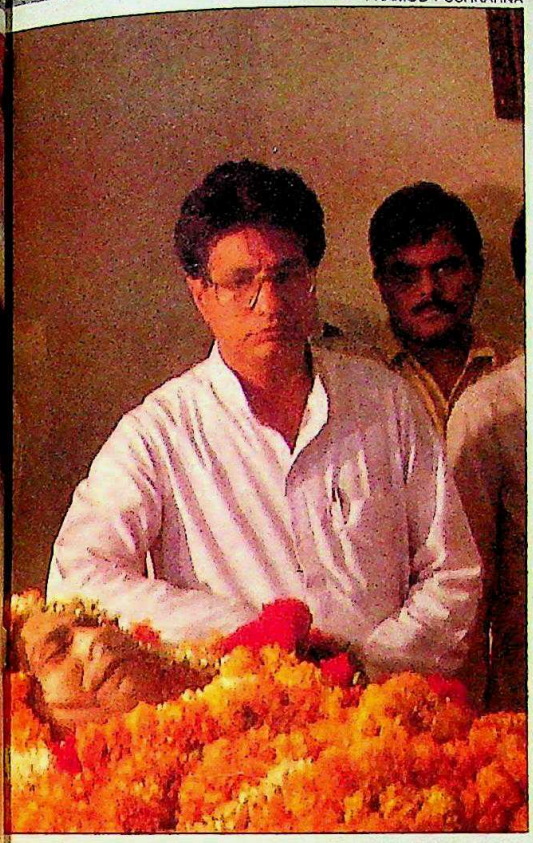
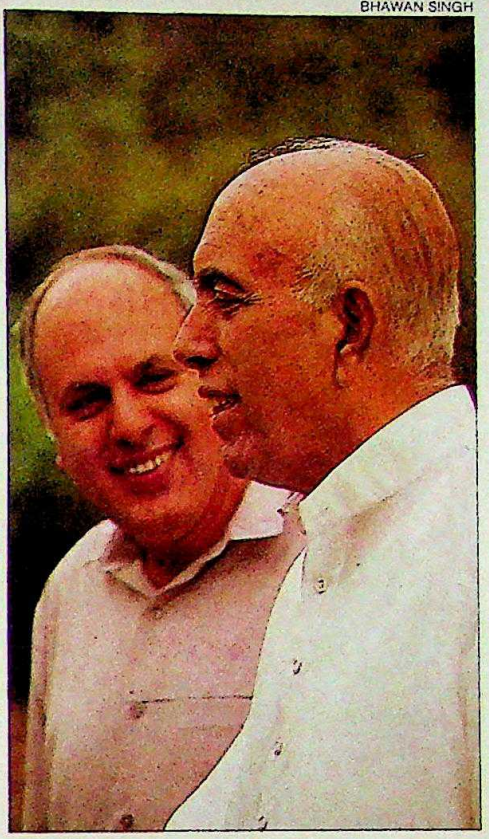
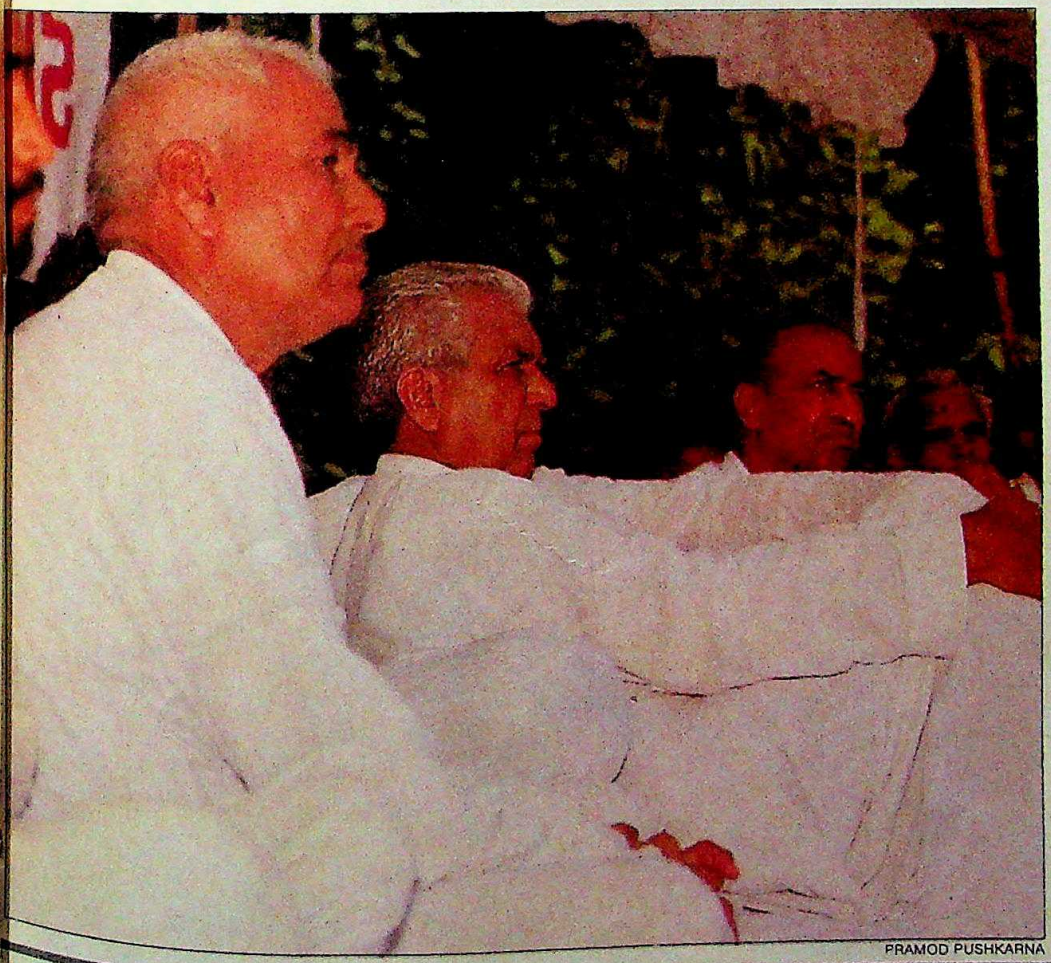


BHAWAN SINGH



(Clockwise from left) Sanjay Gandhi; Ajit Singh at Charan Singh's funeral; Farooq with Sheikh Abdullah; Chautala with Devi Lal: the inheritors



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

All through the decade, both at the Centre and in the states, in the Congress(I) and in other parties, dynastic succession received a solid impetus.

"He was not a son but like an elder brother who gave me support and help.

INDIRA GANDHI
after Sanjay's death

My sons won't succeed me.

DEVI LAL, 1988

Everyone grieves when his mother dies. But I gained courage for there grew a feeling that every citizen had lost his mother.

RAJIV GANDHI, 1988"

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Bakeman

Hold up this roll and observe its extraordinary effect on the people you play cards with.

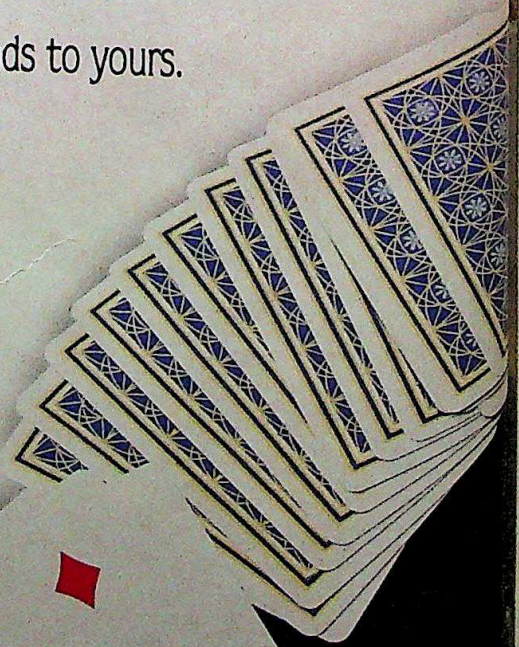
They shift their attention from their hands to yours.

And while putting down their next card, they'll reach out, quite absent-mindedly, for your roll of MINT-O.

For the pearly white, nothing-centred peppermint rings with the irresistible flavour.

So cool, so refreshing. You immediately feel like reaching for another MINT-O yourself.

Give in to the feeling...before the next hand comes along.



New Bakeman's Mint-O.

Sheer self-centred pleasure.

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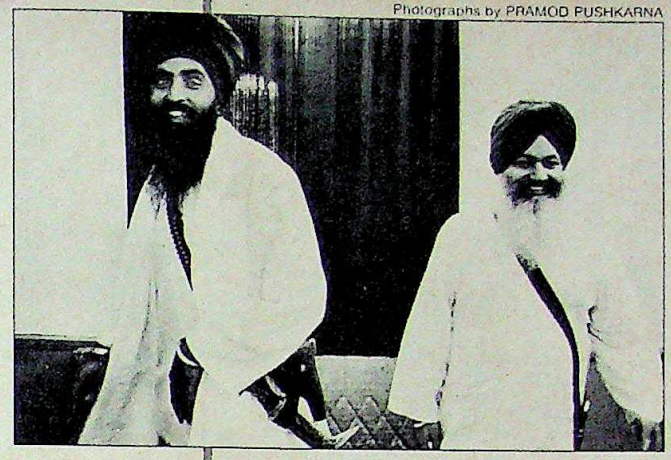
accords in troubled areas, unfettering the economy from traditional shackles, and leading a diplomatic blitzkrieg abroad. But once the tide began to turn, all gain was laid waste carelessly. Accords collapsed, leading to death and destruction; coteries returned with their tool-bags of intrigue and corruption; dictatorial tendencies surfaced, ending diplomatic discussion and consensus; and for the first time a leading light of the Nehru-Gandhi family personally faced charges of financial irregularities.

The other telling political story of the decade, aptly, concerned the amazing rise of V.P. Singh. Like a star-cross'd pair, Rajiv and Singh played out the political theatre of the latter half of the '80s. If Rajiv was a creation of the tragic happenings of the decade, Singh was its discovery. And like Rajiv, Singh too had bestowed on him the halo of martyrdom. In 1984, it got Rajiv the prime ministerial chair; in 1989, it got Singh the same. Singh charted a curious course to the apex. He behaved enigmatically, yet in a decade when honour in politics became extinct, was seen as a man of principle: he was the only politician in the decade who resigned voluntarily first from the chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh, and then as Union defence minister on issues. More than anything else, it was his apparent uprightness that got him the people's nod.

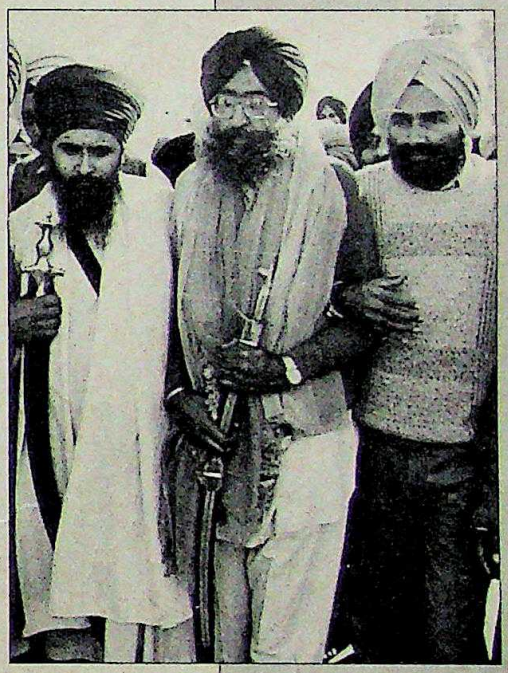
The '80s also had its share of the customary paradoxes. It saw both the upswing and rebuttal of the much-practised in India concept of dynastic succession. Rajiv was inducted into politics after his brother Sanjay died suddenly in 1980. Later, he took over the sceptre when his mother was assassinated, but at decade-end was repudiated, his spectacular ancestry notwithstanding. Elsewhere, dynastic succession received a solid impetus. Haryana saw the most blatant act in this respect

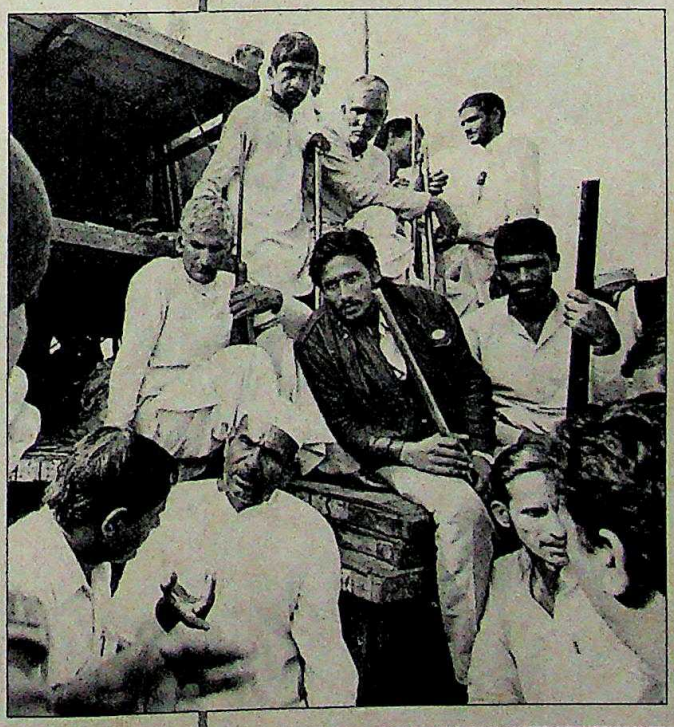
Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Extremist and radical politics proliferated as never before.

(Clockwise from top) Bhindranwale; Mann; Tikait; and Ghising: radicals





"We can easily starve most of the cities of milk and vegetables."
M.S. TIKAIT, 1988

"We will have no other choice left but to demand separation from West Bengal if the state Government decides to create trouble for us."
SUBHAS GHISING, 1988

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as Devi Lal, treating the state like his fiefdom, handed over the reins of chief ministership to his eldest son, Om Prakash Chautala. The outrageousness of the act was outlined by the fact that Chautala was not even a member of the Haryana Assembly. A similar rite of succession took place when US-educated Ajit Singh, effortlessly inherited from Charan Singh, along with his property, the mantle of leadership. Another person to be anointed the inheritor of his father's political legacy was the foreign-educated Farooq Abdullah. Providing further legitimacy to dynastic succession in Indian politics, in 1983, he received as his inheritance the National Conference leadership and also Jammu and Kashmir's chief ministership from Sheikh Abdullah.

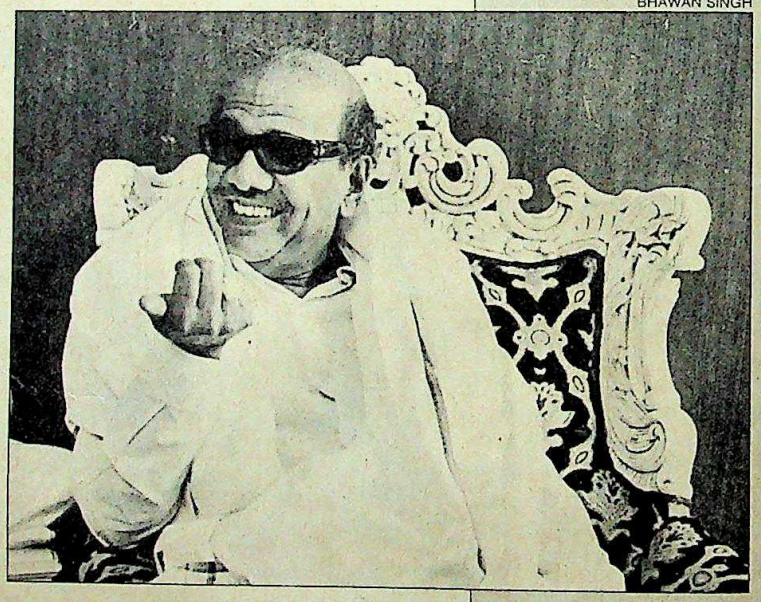
THOUGH the '80s were ruled almost entirely—barring one-odd month—by the Congress(I), it was a decade that saw a steady erosion in the party's credibility and base, leading finally to its ouster from power. The creed for the decade was spelled out in January 1980 by Sanjay Gandhi, who installed young, fiery, and aggressive leaders at both the Centre and the states. He made personal loyalty to him and his mother the sole criterion for the distribution of sinecures. The dominant roles were usurped by A.R. Antulay, Gundu Rao, Zail Singh, Kamal Nath, Arjun Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, Jagdish Tytler and Sanjay Singh. All this proved to be shortlived. Rajiv did try to change things, but eventually one coterie gave way to another, one hatchet-man to another. Power continued to be concentrated at the Centre so overwhelmingly that the party began to lose its clout in the states, as state leaders and even chief ministers were reduced to mere factotums whose fate, both immediate and long-term, depended on the high command. It became customary for chief ministers to be humiliated at airports or summarily removed by encouraging centrally sponsored revolts in the states.

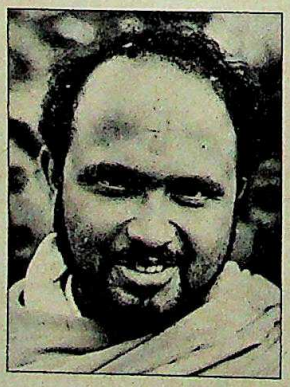
One of the most outstanding features of the '80s was that as the Congress(I)'s grip on the states waned, there occurred a big surge of regionalism. Regional parties began to proliferate and regional leaders sprout. And where the ballot failed to deliver power, the

SHYAM TEKWANI

Regional parties not only gained strength in their own areas, but also came into the national reckoning.

BHAWAN SINGH





(From top) Jayalalitha; M. Karunanidhi; Prafulla Kumar Mahanta; and N.T. Rama Rao: heady rise

"Telugu prestige is involved in this assembly election. It must be saved."

N.T. RAMA RAO, 1982

"The people of Tamil Nadu have to decide whether they want to be run by Delhi or Madras."

K. ANBAZHAGAN, 1988
DMK General Secretary

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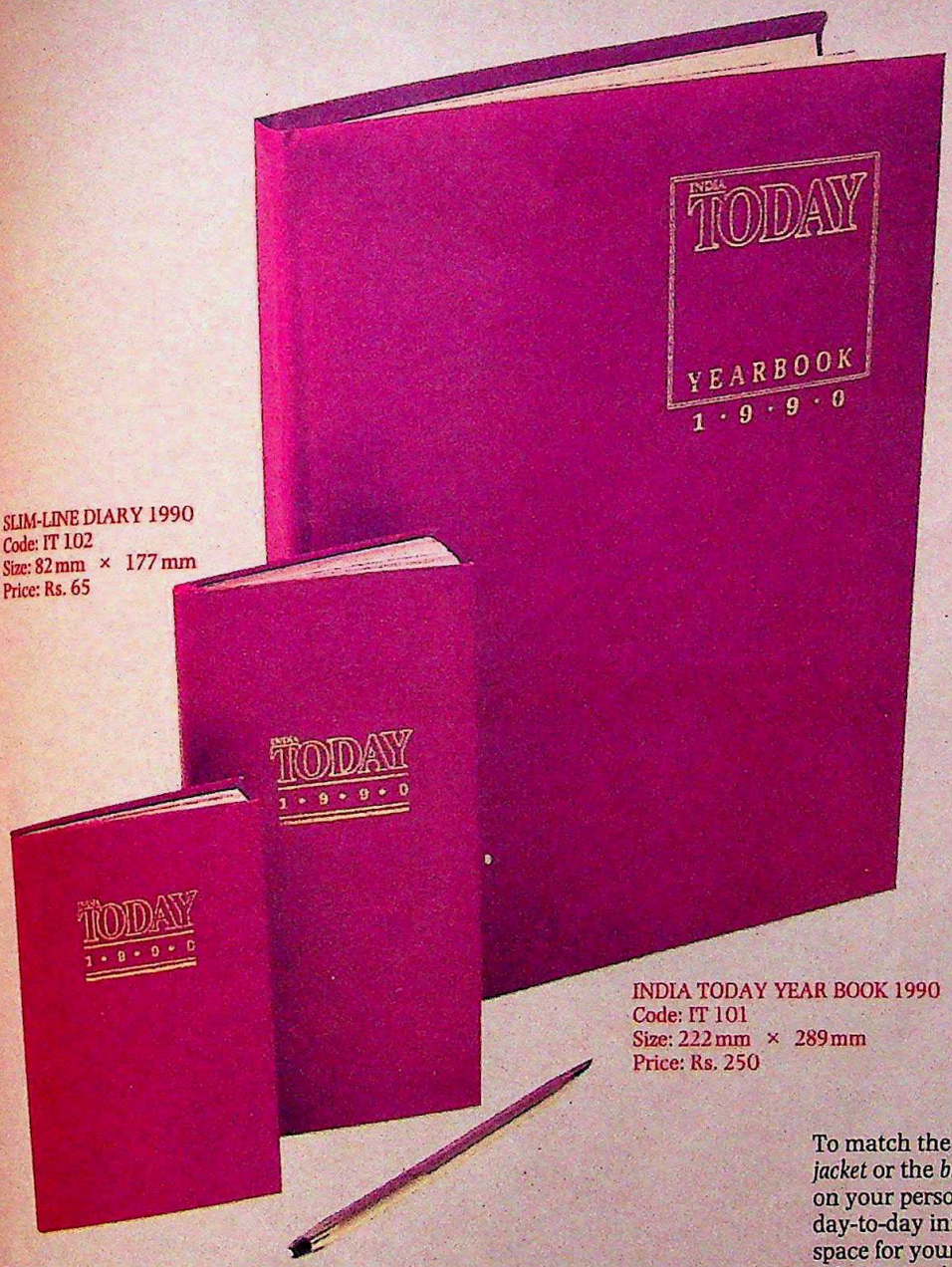

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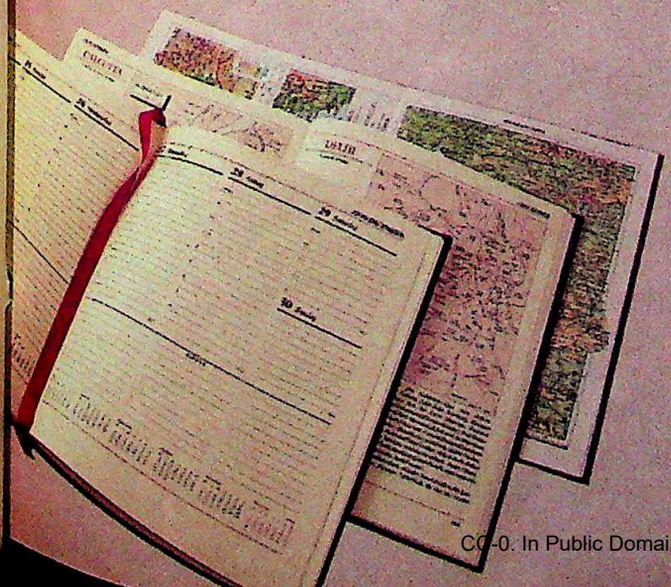

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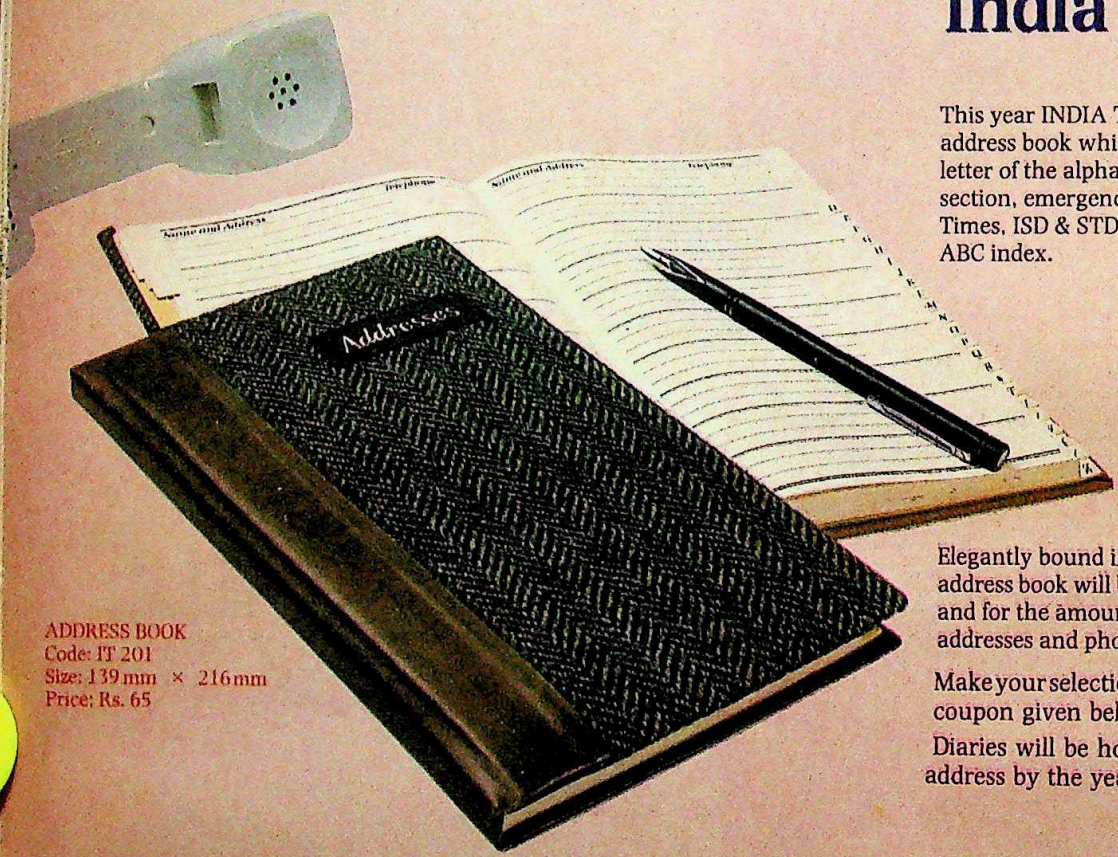

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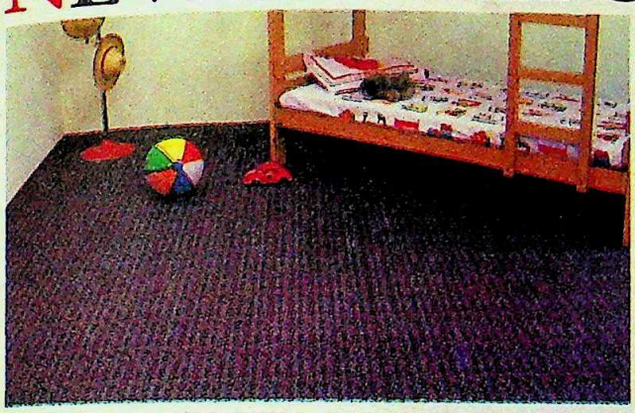

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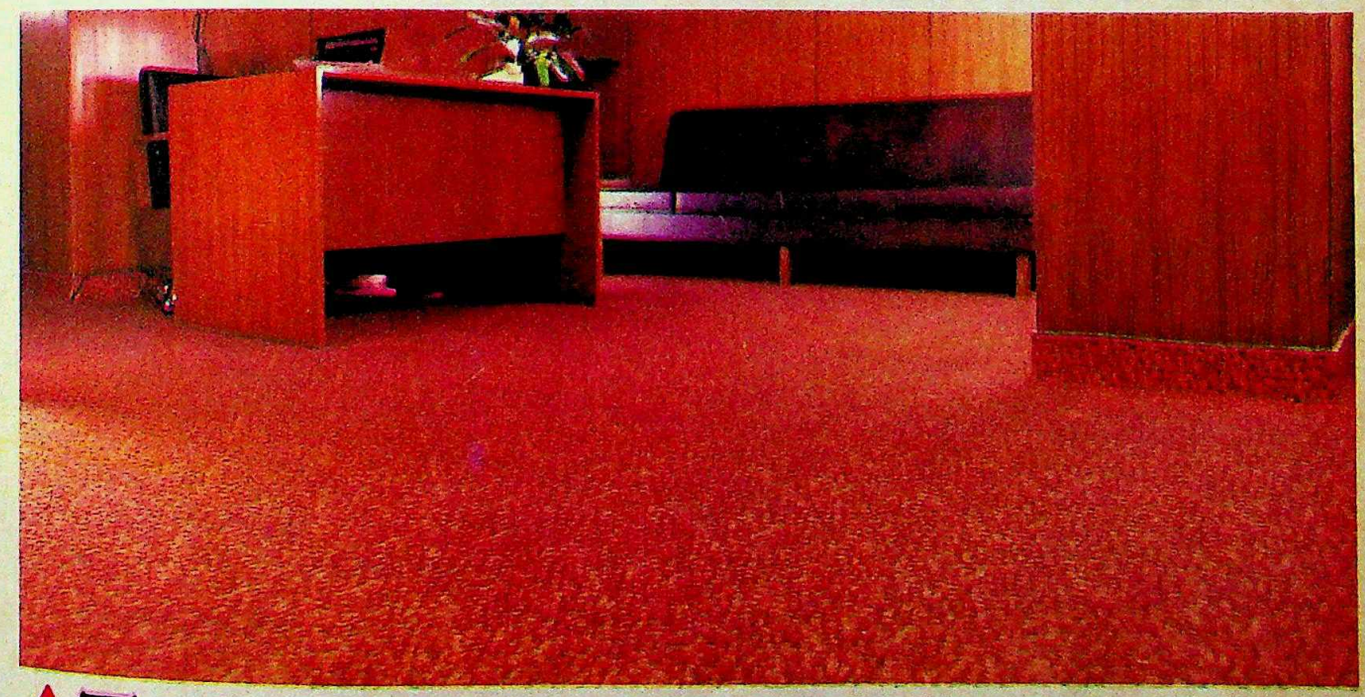

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Automatically adjust the pressure on the cloth with Usha's special 'Single Press' presser adjustor. Another feature unique to Usha.

These features are the highlights of Usha's 'Prima Export' model shown in the picture.

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- An open-type shuttle race in 4 Usha models enables even beginners to remove and clean shuttle in less than a minute. A hinged needle plate facilitates easy access to the bobbin.
- A concealed needle bar in Usha models ensures dust-free operation, and minimal wear & tear.
- A special bobbin winder automatically disconnects when the right amount of thread has been wound.
- We care for you. That's why we offer features developed over years, to more than match the high international standards in markets of USA, UK, West Germany and many other countries to whom we have exported Usha sewing machines.

USHA

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bullet created leaders. For the first time in Andhra Pradesh, a regional party, the Telugu Desam Party, trounced the Congress(I). And that too within three months of its formation. In Assam, it was the Asom Gana Parishad that after practising the politics of agitation swept the polls. Both N.T. Rama Rao and Prafulla Kumar Mahanta rode to governmental power playing on chauvinistic sentiments and regional pride.

But it was Punjab that witnessed the most debilitating and dangerous politics of all. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, propped by the Congress(I) to counter the Akalis, transformed into such an ominous spectre that refuses to be buried to date. The Khalistan movement that he fuelled threatened the integrity of the Indian Union as nothing else ever before. This politics of separatism and terrorism created anger and alienation countrywide as thousands were killed to keep it going. Not only did Mrs Gandhi fall to this Frankenstein, but also dozens of other luminaries, including General A.S. Vaidya. The death of Mrs Gandhi and Bhindranwale in 1984 marked the end of a traumatic period, and heralded the beginning of another, apparently more upbeat one.

BUT this era too soon came a full circle, ending in a whimsical and arrogant governance. In the beginning, the Congress(I), which had begun to be perceived as a party of powerbrokers and arrogant bosses, began to be seen as the protector of the country's integrity. But soon the initial euphoria Rajiv created by seeking positive change, began to dispel as the shortcomings of Rajiv's unofficial coterie, with little political experience came to the fore. And things began to return to where they'd begun from. The Congress(I) began to re-transform. Mrs Gandhi's arrogance and personality cult was re-born. Those who'd been given powers and independence in the party and the Government had begun to acquire clout and image. This Rajiv viewed as a threat to his leadership, and the axe began to fall on V.P. Singh, Arjun Singh, Narayan Datt Tiwari and others. Rajiv began to become inaccessible to the party and its other leaders. Then suddenly his office and secretariat usurped all the power both in the party and the Government. A period of desperation and decline began.

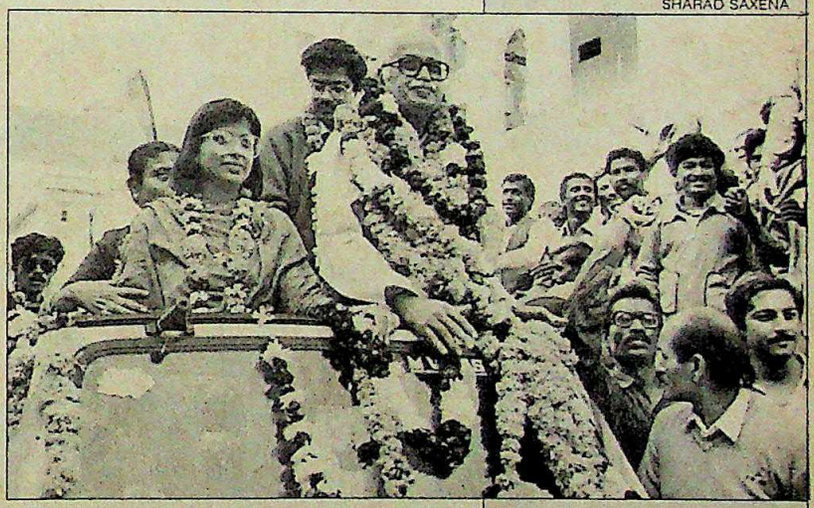
The awesome nature of trying to build a clean political culture in the corruption-ridden '80s became apparent when within two years of coming to power Rajiv had abandoned all his fine notions and joined the bandwagon. As the 1989 elections drew nearer the Congress(I) saw the return of the old guard. All those once discarded as powerbrokers and corrupt wound their way back into power. The collapse of the

SAIBAL DAS

Basu addressing a CPI(M) meeting

In the ultimate irony, the BJP and the left parties found themselves shoring up a government at the Centre.

SHARAD SAXENA



Advani at a BJP victory procession

K.M. KISHAN

C. Rajeshwar Rao

"Rajiv Gandhi had promised to take India to the 21st century. He does not realise that India can get there without him."

JYOTI BASU, 1989

"I don't mind if today somebody regards the BJP as a Hindu party."

L.K. ADVANI, 1988

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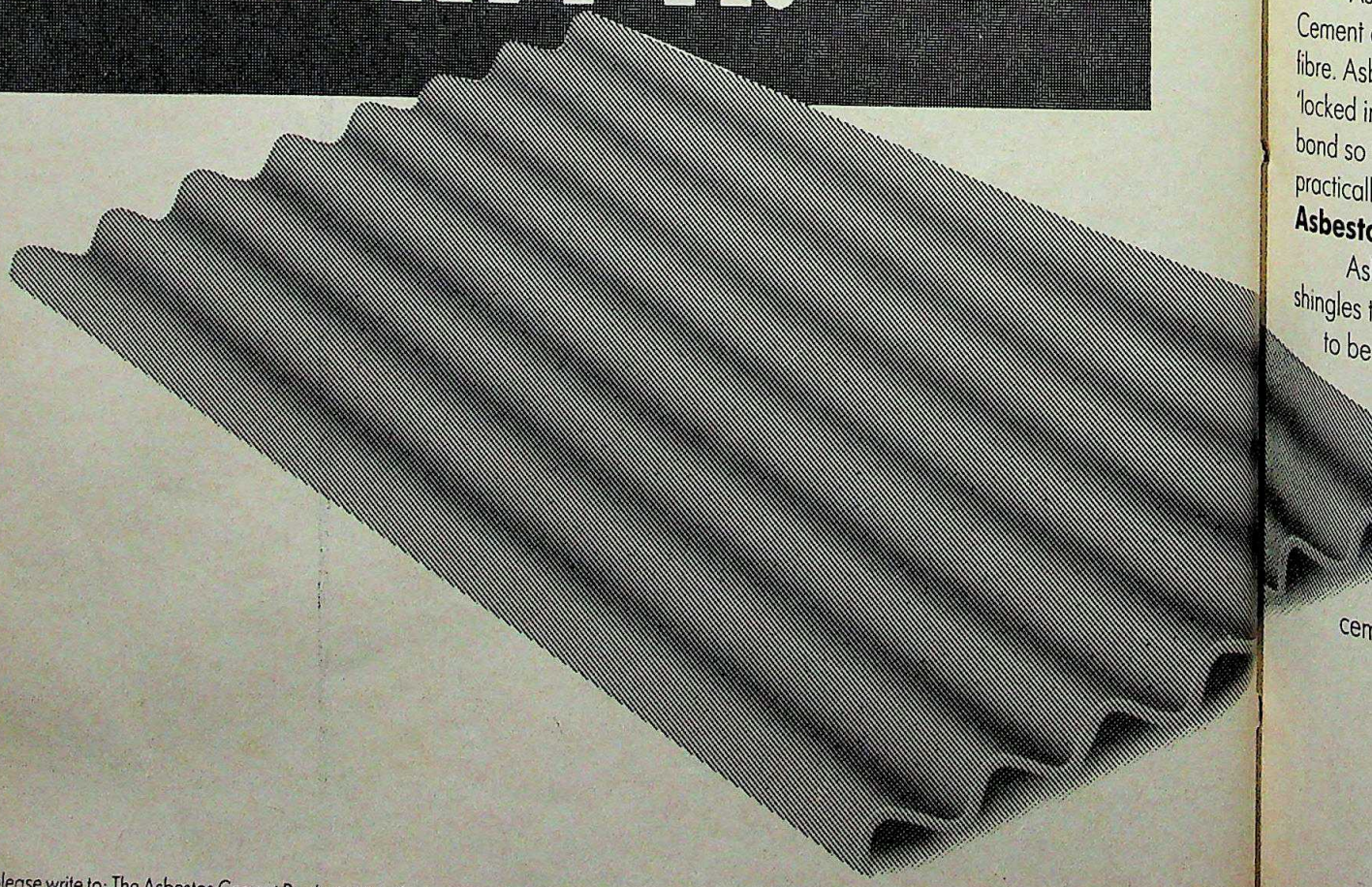
AFTER 60 YEARS WITH A CLEAN SHEET, WE WON'T LET FALSE PROPAGANDA DIRTY IT.



For more information, please write to: The Asbestos Cement Products Manufacturers' Association, P.O. Box 612, New Delhi 110019.

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For over 60 years, Asbestos Cement Sheets have proven to be the ideal roofing material in India. With no scientific evidence of any health problems, whatsoever, associated with their use.

Now vested interests are indulging in false propaganda. And trying to create confusion by citing occupational hazards of the yesteryears and problems of friable asbestos insulation products, to put Asbestos Cement Sheets in disrepute.

We think it's time you knew the facts.

What are Asbestos Cement Sheets?

Asbestos Cement Sheets are made of over 90% Cement and reinforced with about 10% Chrysotile asbestos fibre. Asbestos being uniquely 100% alkali resistant gets 'locked in' with the cement matrix permanently. The chemical bond so formed makes separation of asbestos fibre practically impossible.

Asbestos Cement Sheets. Safe to use.

Asbestos cement has been used as sheets, slates and shingles the world over for several decades. And continues to be used. Without any proven harm to the public and environment.

The health issue essentially relates only to inhalation of asbestos fibre dust in large quantities over a prolonged period of time which could be responsible for health hazards to workers in asbestos cement factories. However, strict regulatory norms in line with ILO recommendations observed during manufacture eliminates this possibility.

In fact, scientific and medical studies done by leading researchers, environmentalists and epidemiologists show that normal use of Asbestos Cement Products pose no additional risk to the environment or the public. This has also been the recommendation of a working group set up by W.H.O.

The study group constituted by the Health and Safety Executive of H.M. Govt. of U.K. states:

"Asbestos Cement Products are sometimes confused in the public mind with asbestos insulation. We would think it necessary, therefore, to say that we should not expect danger to arise from existing Asbestos Cement Products eg. roofing, sheeting and guttering."

The many advantages of Asbestos Cement Sheets.

Like cement, Asbestos Cement Sheets do not deteriorate with age. In fact, they get stronger and need no maintenance.

Asbestos Cement Sheets are also inherently resistant to fire, heat, rain, corrosive coastal weather and industrial pollutants.

Add higher coverage efficiency to their proven cost effectiveness, and it's no wonder that over one billion sq. m. of Asbestos Cement Sheets have been used for industrial, commercial and household roofs in India.

Now the next time someone tries to mislead you about Asbestos Cement Sheets, you are ready with the facts.

ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEETS. SAFE TO USE. LAST A LIFETIME.

THE ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

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Congress(I) further inflamed the politics of violence and agitation. So while in 1987 all the Congress(I) chief ministers were being reshuffled like a pack of cards, local leaders like Devi Lal in Haryana and M. Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu emerged. The political climate also proved amenable to the rise of several fringe leaders like Mahendra Singh Tikait, Sharad Joshi, Subhash Ghising and Kanshi Ram. Each of them grabbed a major share of Congress(I) turf in various regions. While Rajiv's Congress(I) assumed the appearance of espousing the cause of the urban middle class, these fringe leaders donned the role of saviours of their community's or region's interests.

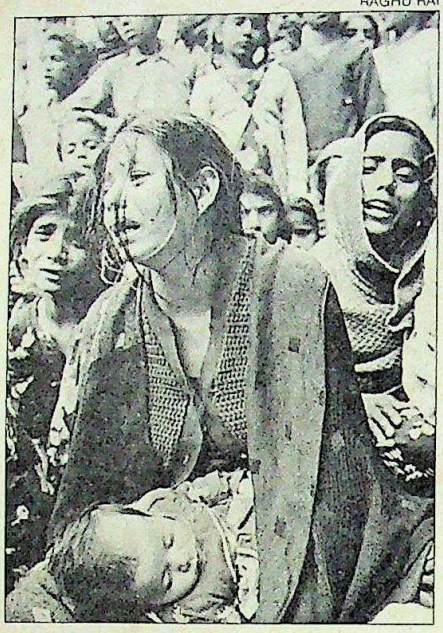
IN the '80s, much more dangerous than the rise of regional chauvinism was the rise of the politics of communalism. While Rajiv dithered on the Shah Bano, Ram Janmabhoomi, and Punjab issues, religion-based parties and groups began to appear darkly on the political horizon. Alarmingly, the Ayodhya controversy was exploited by virtually every political party, despite its obvious potential for igniting a communal holocaust. The decade witnessed Hindu revivalism, and suddenly the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the BJP began to acquire a social acceptability. The most emphatic example of their growing respectability was the 1989 general elections which saw as many as 88 BJP members elected to the Lok Sabha.

But in something that was typical of the paradoxes of the '80s, even as non-secular politics gained strength, the leftists also acquired new areas of influence. Their main areas of dominance, of course, remained confined to the east and the deep south. And nothing symbolised the medley politics of the decade better than the scenario the Centre presented in December 1989. At the end of the decade, the Government that held power in New Delhi was being propped up by both the left and the right, and was even being supported by the fundamentalist Akali Dal.

In the final analysis, the '80s have set the stage for fascinating political play in the '90s. Exciting new equations are at work, and if the National Front experiment succeeds, new definitions will be written for federalism and Centre-state relations. The '80s have spawned many challenges for the next decade. Above all of ensuring that secularism survives, that the aspirations of separatist forces are met without the integrity of the nation being compromised, that the cult of coteries and corruption does not consume the Indian political culture completely. It is clear that the challenges of the '90s are going to be far more serious than those faced in the '80s.

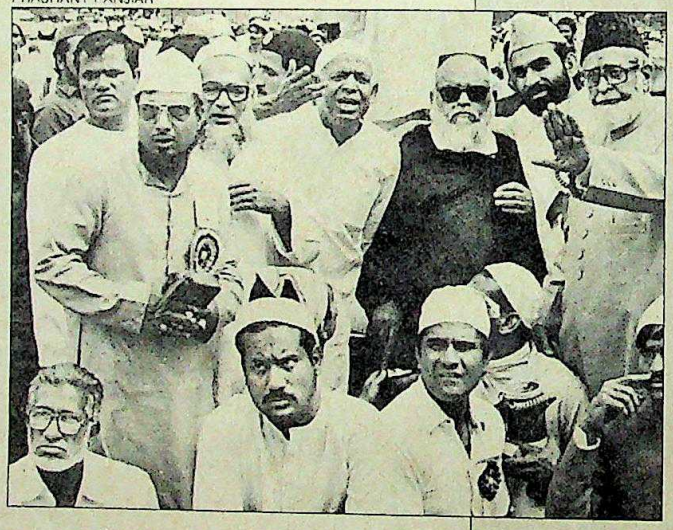
—PRABHU CHAWLA

RAGHU RAI



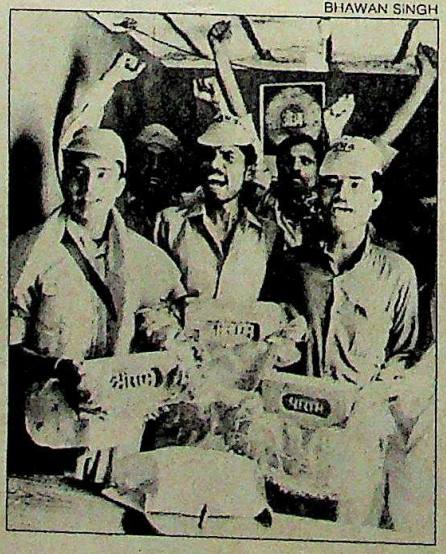
Victims of 1984 Delhi riots

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Babri Masjid demonstration

BHAWAN SINGH



Ram Shila puja

Most dangerous was the rise of the politics of communalism: Muslim militancy as well as Hindu revivalism.

"If I start a movement, do you think the Government can stop me?"
SYED ABDULLAH BUKHARI, 1988

"Only those Muslims who accept the concept of Hindu rashtra will be allowed to stay in the country."
BAL THACKERAY, 1984

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Nothing less than a deluxe

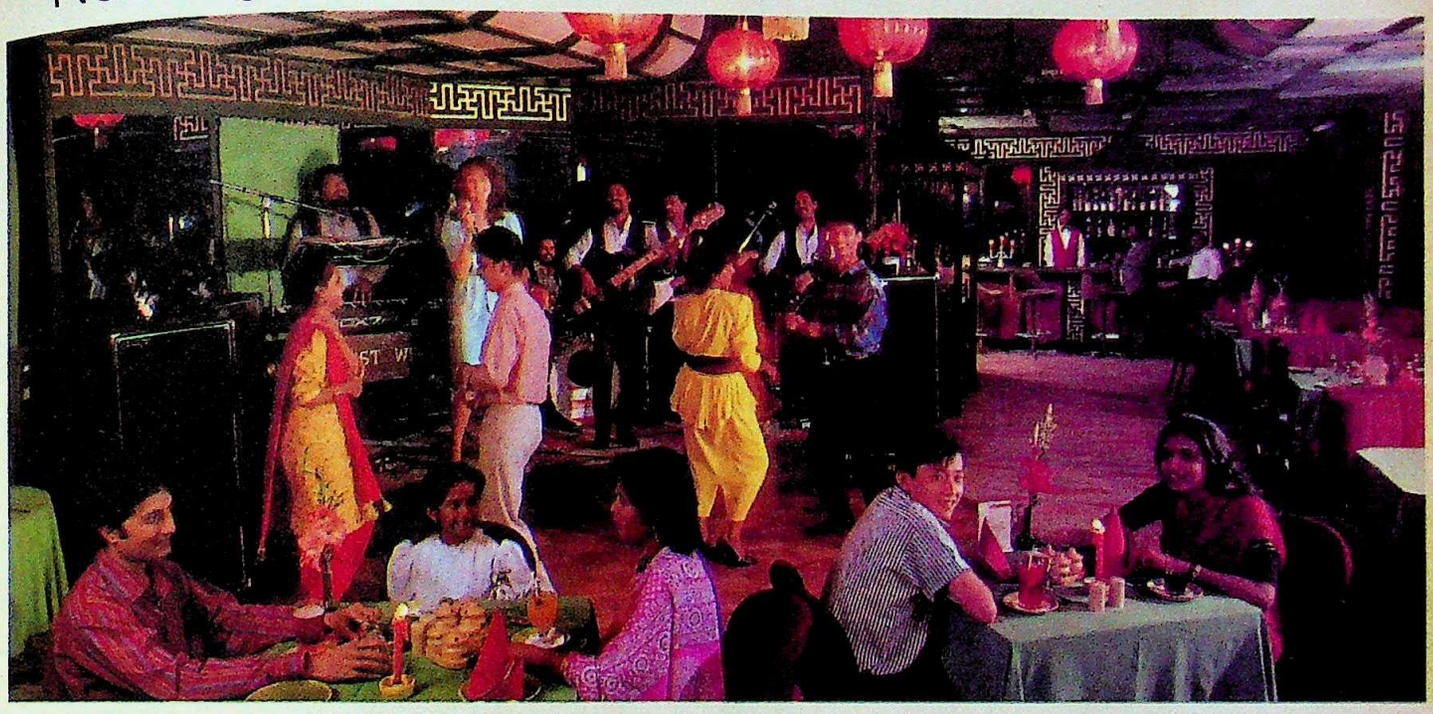

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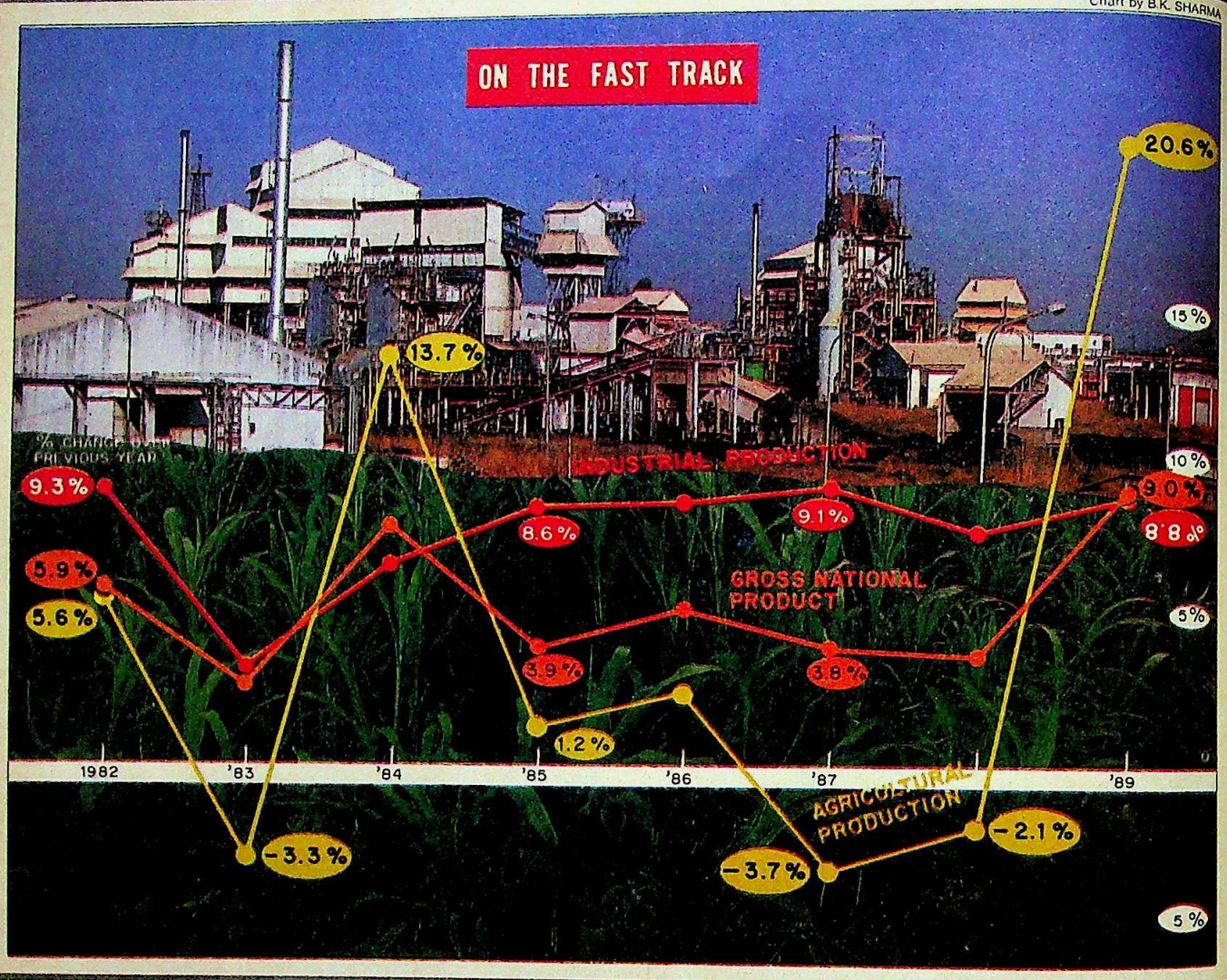
Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Getting Into Stride

The loosening of government controls set the economy moving, but serious problems continue to bedevil it

IT was the beginnings of a brave new world. Of signs of maturity. A slumbering giant slowly shaking off the sloth and lethargy of decades. Since India's tryst with destiny 42 years ago, there had been innumerable predictions that the country's economy was ready for take-off. But it had been strangely reluctant to soar. Then suddenly, in the '80s, the brakes which had placed crippling restrictions on the economy disappeared.

Almost overnight, the dreaded licence-control raj was cremated. The Hindu rate of growth of 2.5 per cent a year was buried. It was the age of liberalisation. A tryst with a new destiny.

Factories were built furiously. Big became beautiful. Companies started looking beyond protected home markets. Profit became less of a dirty word. Foreign capital and technology were welcomed. And there was greater stress on productivity and quality. The incomes of the middle classes moved up, with an overbearing taxation structure becoming a thing of the past.

The transition wasn't entirely painless. The country is today more steeped in debt than ever. The gap between government revenue and expenditure has grown by leaps and bounds. The yawning deficit has stoked inflationary fires. And while the economy has grown, jobs are as scarce as ever.

Still, it was a sea change from the '70s. At that time, the maximum marginal income tax rate was hiked to an enterprise-throttling 97.5 per cent. Emphasis was laid on self-reliance and import substitution rather than on export promotion. Massive investments were made in the 'core' sector. Yet, shortages persisted even as large segments of industry could utilise barely half their installed capacities. The public sector mounted up huge losses. Two years after the oil shock in 1980, the country was forced to go to the International Monetary Fund to tide over its balance of payments crises.

It was then that realisation dawned that controls had not

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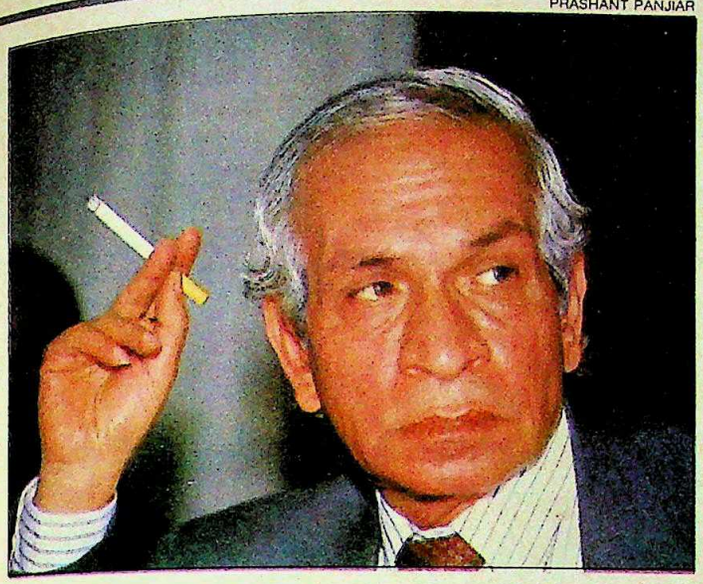
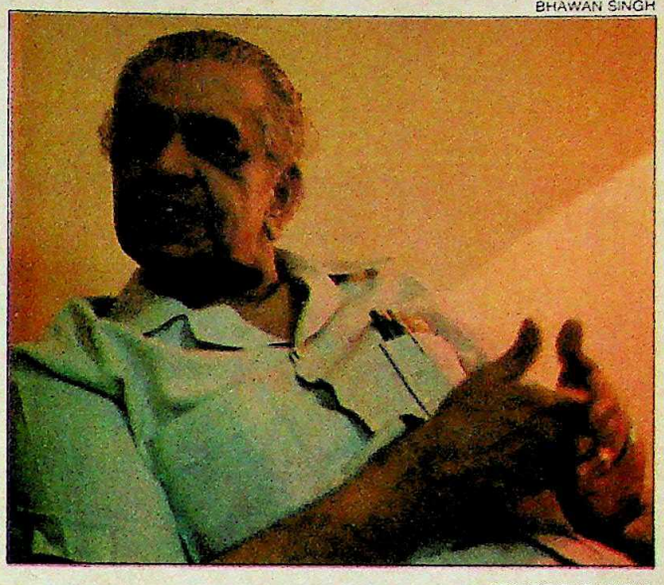


BHAWAN SINGH



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

(Clockwise from top left) Arora; Jha; and Ahluwalia: messiahs of liberalisation

> The '70s showed that controls merely stifled growth.
>
> "Bureaucratic controls had to be eliminated for a modern industrial base."
> MONTEK SINGH AHLUWALIA

redressed inequalities, merely stifled growth. Jawaharlal Nehru and P.C. Mahalanobis went out of fashion. In their place entered the new messiahs of liberalisation: L.K. Jha, Abid Hussain, Gopi Arora and then Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

The process of liberalisation was set off in the early '80s with the establishment of a series of committees: the Jha Committee which enumerated the administrative reforms needed to remove the shackles on industrial growth, the Arjun Sengupta Committee which talked of making the public sector autonomous and the official group headed by former finance secretary M. Narasimhan which favoured replacing physical controls on business with fiscal controls.

These committees laid the bedrock on which the new policies were formulated. Licensing was virtually done away with and rules and procedures were simplified. Areas like telecommunications were opened out to private companies. The asset limit for MRTP companies was raised from Rs 20 crore to Rs 100 crore. Income tax and corporate tax rates were lowered and excise duties sought to be rationalised with the introduction of a modified value-added tax (MODVAT) system. Interest rates were made more flexible and the private sector was encouraged to raise resources directly from the capital market.

The loosening of controls paid off. While inefficient companies scrambled for survival, the trim and fit in the corporate world prospered. Particularly, companies manufacturing consumer goods and durables. Over a decade or so, the number of two-wheeler manufacturers went up from six to 15, that of polyester yarn producers from six to 24, that of car models from two to seven and of television models from 12 to over 100. "Liberalisation has had a strong consumer-oriented bias," observes Amaresh Bagchi, director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy.

Decontrol of the cement industry resulted in a surplus after decades of shortages. Faced with periodic gluts, fertiliser companies fought discount wars, black market premia on two-wheelers disappeared while manufacturers of computers, copiers and television sets vied with one another to pare prices.

THE robust health of the infrastructure helped. Power generation, though still short of demand, nearly doubled between 1981 and 1989, mostly because of improved plant load factor. The railways almost always exceeded their freight movement targets. The Bombay High oil and gas fields helped reduce petroleum imports in the early '80s. Says Y.K. Alagh, former member of the Planning Commission: "The '80s marked the maturing of the Indian economy."

One indication of the industrial boom: the number of licences issued every year went up from 60 in the early '70s to nearly 1,000 by the mid-'80s. The number of foreign collaboration agreements approved by the Government went up threefold in this period. And direct foreign investment went up from under Rs 10 crore in 1980 to Rs 240 crore in 1988.

But liberalisation also exacted a price. While sunrise industries like petrochemicals, synthetic fibres, telecommunications

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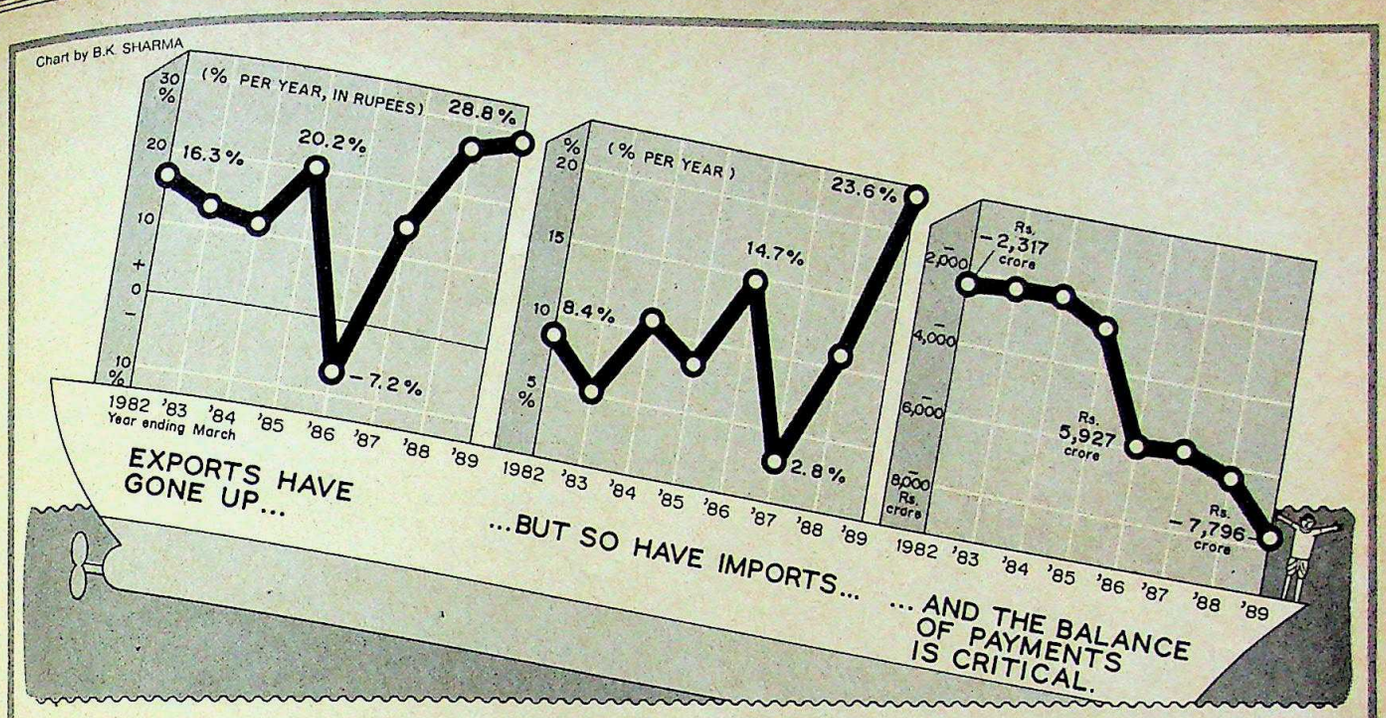
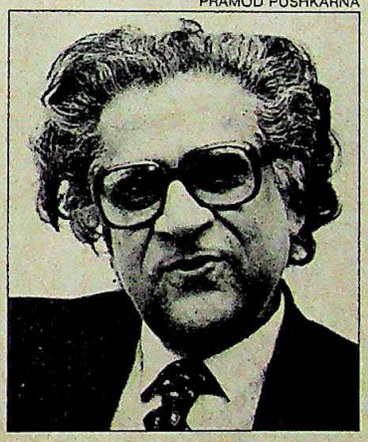


Industry began to look beyond home markets.

"Foreign debt has mortgaged the country's future."
ARUN GHOSH
Planning Commission member

Hussain (below left); Alagh: emphasis on exports

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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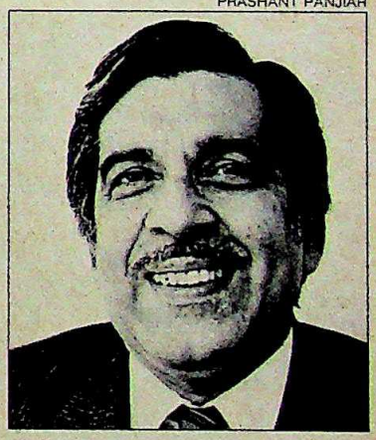

and electronics modernised and grew, a murky sunset descended on the smokestacks of cotton textile and jute mills, old engineering and paper concerns. Worse, the public sector earned a pathetic post-tax return of 2.8 per cent on a mind-boggling investment exceeding Rs 72,000 crore.

The excellent performance of industry was matched by agriculture which showed signs of becoming insulated from the vagaries of nature. After the 1979 drought, there were heavy foodgrain imports, inflation jumped, industrial growth became negative and GNP fell. The drought of 1987 was, in sharp contrast, managed with fewer headaches. A food buffer helped weather the production shortfall and prices were kept in check. One reason is that the share of agriculture in GDP declined: from 47 per cent in 1970 to 30 per cent in 1987. So a fall in agricultural output has less impact on the economy.

But problems remained, mainly due to the Government's obsession with industrial development. Thus, even as investment in the rural areas slowed and the terms of trade turned against agriculture, farmers stridently demanded more remunerative prices, higher subsidies and waiving of loans. Says C.H. Hanumantha Rao of the Institute of Economic Growth: "The adverse impact of the slowdown in investment in agriculture, especially in irrigation, will be felt for many years to come."

The other crisis area was the burgeoning trade deficit. To encourage exports, free trade zones were set up and allurements offered to those earning hard currency. Most important, export earnings were exempt from income tax. Also, the steady depreciation in the international value of the rupee meant that India's exports became cheaper. So exports surged by an average of 15 per cent annually through the '80s.

BUT imports went up faster, in particular, imports of capital goods. Much of these were financed by external borrowing—from the commercial market at high interest rates as sources of concessional finance began drying up.

The domestic debt position was equally critical. "The '80s saw the end of the budget surpluses of the '70s. This will be the key problem area in the '90s," notes former Planning Commission member Raja Chelliah. Throughout the decade, the Government spent much of its money on administration, on defence, or in doling out farm subsidies. In fact, the Government's internal debt rose sevenfold during the '80s. And its annual interest burden on domestic debt between 1974-75 and 1989 accelerated at the astounding compound growth rate of 52 per cent.

Worse, the rise in revenue did not match the growth in

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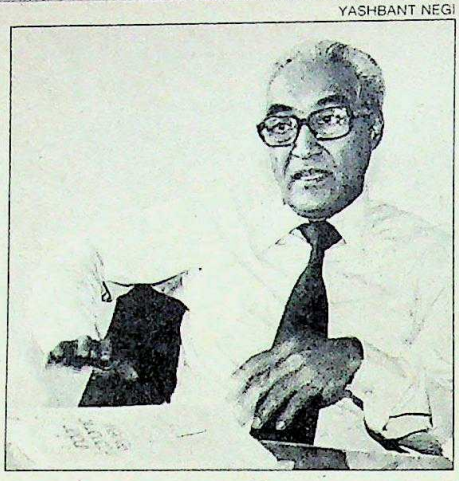
YASHBANT NEGI

YASHBANT NEGI

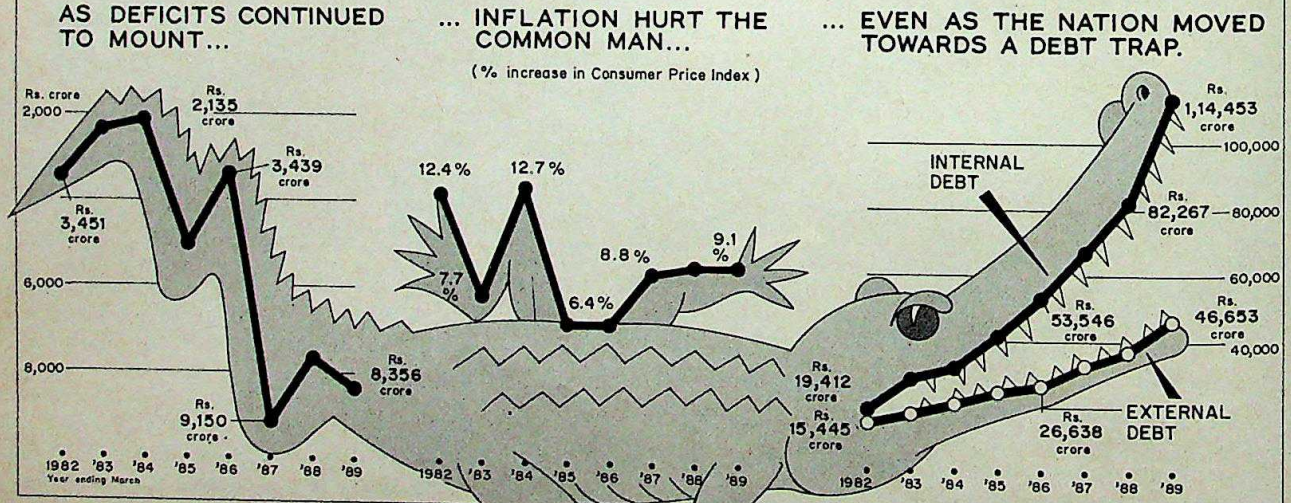


(From top left) L.C. Jain; B.S. Minhas; Hanumantha Rao: a change of tack

The new Government is likely to revive the rhetoric of socialism, but that may be more style than substance.

"Liberalisation was meant for a few. For the vast majority, it has spelt nothing but disaster."
L.C. JAIN
Planning Commission member

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



expenditure. Savings rates stagnated. And while tax revenues have gone up in absolute terms, as a proportion of the GDP, they have remained stagnant at 16.4 per cent—because the Government did not broaden its tax base, especially by including the rural rich in the income tax net.

Predictably the fiscal profligacy of the Government has fuelled the fires of inflation. Says B.S. Minhas of the Indian Statistical Institute: "The '80s have been marked by a total lack of financial discipline and this has been a major reason for inflation." What's worse is that retail prices of essential commodities—like edible oils, foodgrains, sugar and vanaspati—have risen relatively faster.

Since the fundamental problems in the economy still remain—and liberalisation has not made any impact—it is but inevitable that the new Government headed by V.P. Singh should again be stressing the virtues of socialism. Economic ideology has turned full circle. Indira Gandhi's rhetoric of the early '70s is being repeated by the new rulers. But that may be more a matter of style rather than substance.

Despite the daunting problems that face it, the Indian economy continues to display remarkable resilience. The '90s may well see the Indian economic experience—even if it continues to be somewhat mixed and sometimes mixed-up—establish its uniqueness on the map of the world. And develop better than before, certainly quicker than most countries of the world.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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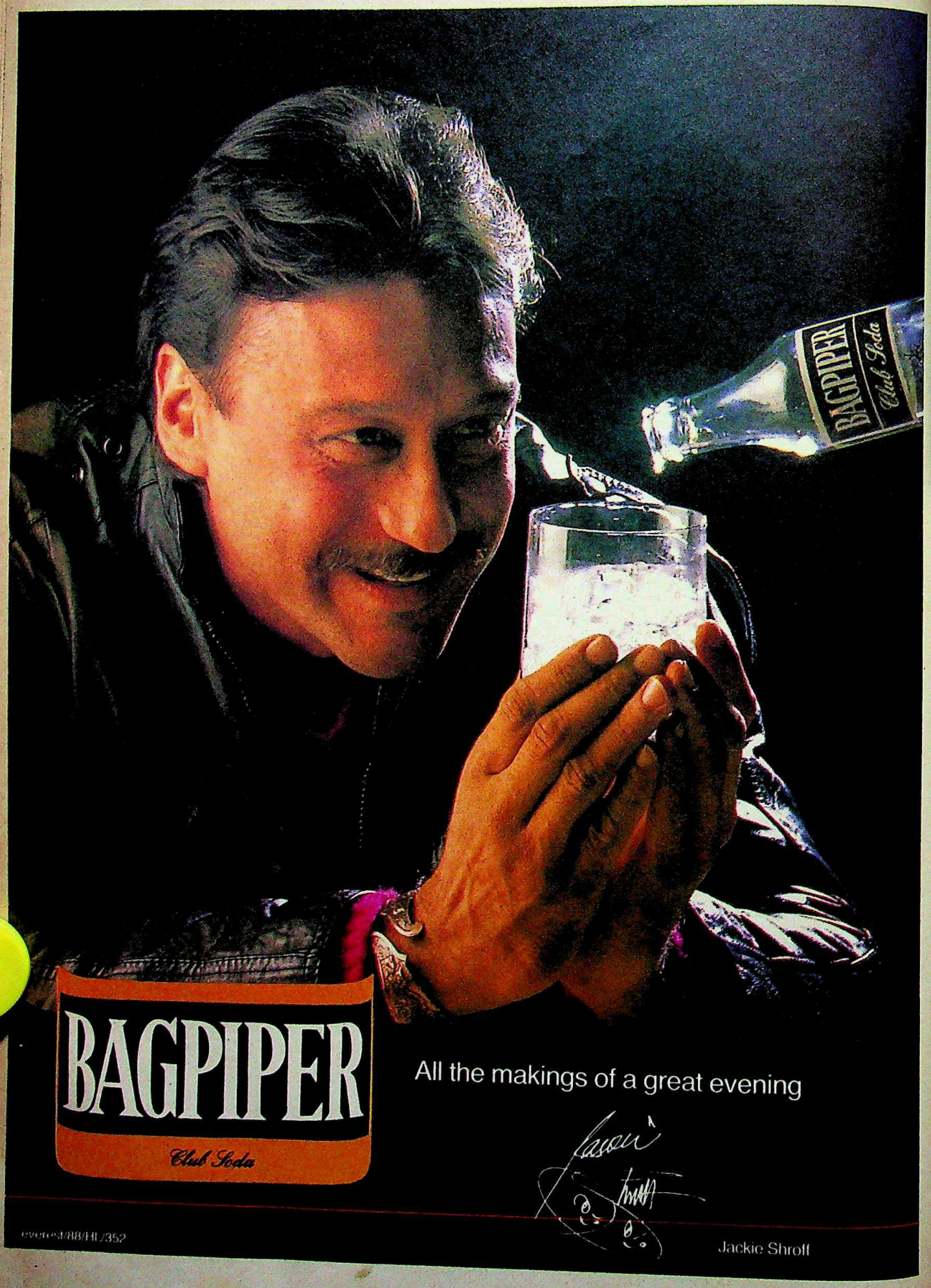

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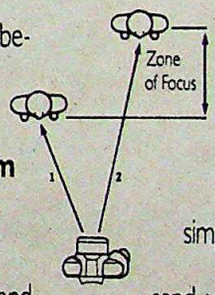

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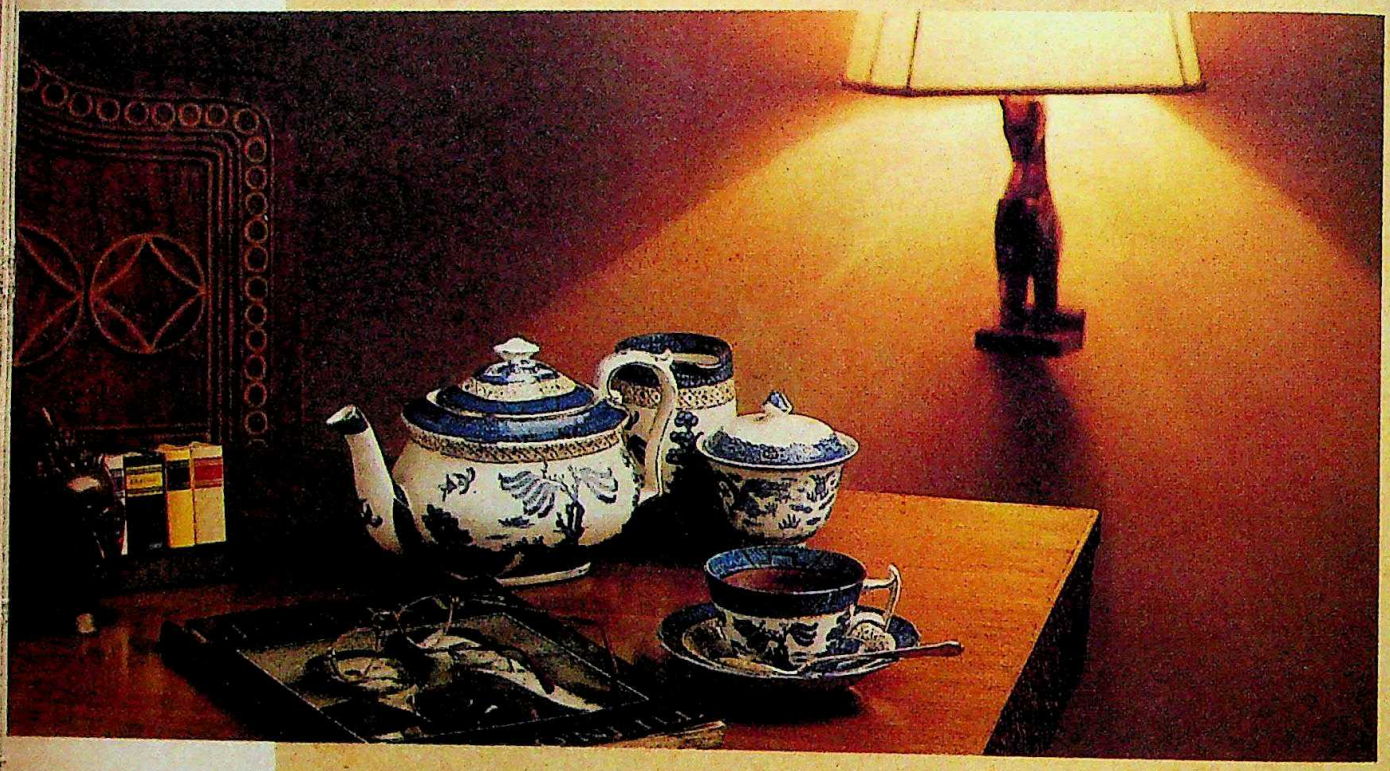
For most it is an extravagance
For some it is the finest taste in tea



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A Buoyant Mood

In an era of unprecedented growth, a new optimism

Charts by B.K. SHARMA

FOR three decades after Independence, business was a dirty word in the essentially socialist Indian lexicon. The businessman's wealth was envied. But in the rogue's gallery of the collective national consciousness, he rubbed shoulders with profiteers, racketeers and black marketeers.

The '80s changed all that. Businessmen suddenly became matinee idols. From being smothered among lists of share and commodity prices, they moved to the front pages of newspapers. The world of business acquired a new respectability.

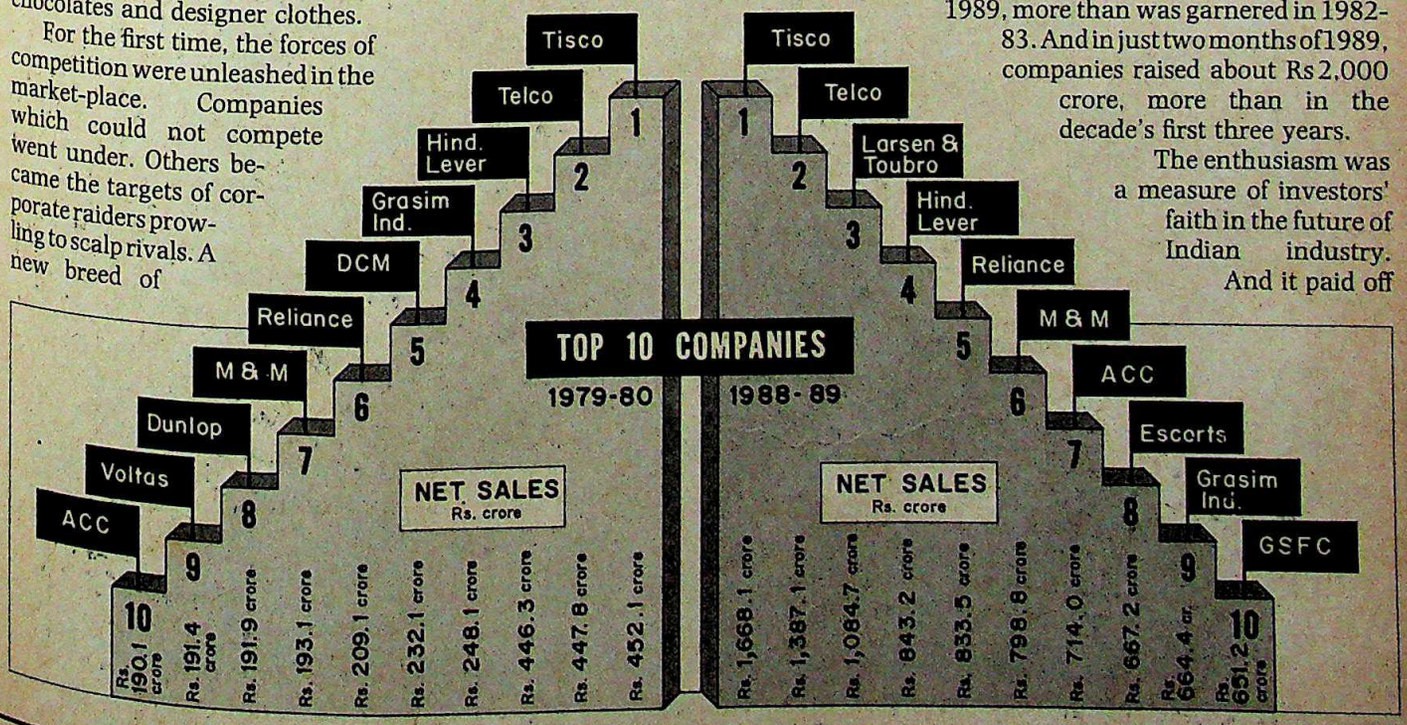
The changed perception was a reflection of changed realities. Spurred by liberalised economic policies, industry broke new ground, growing at an average rate of about 7 per cent a year, far above the crawling 3-per cent rates of the previous decades. The stock-market boomed. Blue chip shares acquired a fan following. A new word came to be coined—the mega issue. The Indian middle class announced its arrival. Its members had money to spend and splurge—on shares, bathroom tiles, chocolates and designer clothes.

For the first time, the forces of competition were unleashed in the market-place. Companies which could not compete went under. Others became the targets of corporate raiders prowling to scalp rivals. A new breed of entrepreneurs made its presence felt—rising from nowhere to the front ranks of the corporate pecking order. Managements refused to knuckle under to trade unions, and the unions revealed a new pragmatism.

To be sure, the silver cloud had its dark lining. Large chunks of the population were excluded from the industrial boom. Businessmen with the right political connections walked away with giant projects. The role of the financial institutions came in for attack. Nevertheless, for Indian business, the '80s were the age of optimism. Whatever glitches remained were seen as the deadwood of a dying era, that would soon be swept away.

Easily the decade's most visible symbol was the prancing bull of the booming stock-market. In 1980, the country's investor population was a piffling 2 million. By 1989, there were 10 million. In 1980, companies raised Rs 165 crore through new share issues. The 1989 figure was a stunning Rs 5,000 crore. One company, Larsen & Toubro, raised Rs 820 crore through a single issue in 1989, more than was garnered in 1982-83. And in just two months of 1989, companies raised about Rs 2,000 crore, more than in the decade's first three years.

The enthusiasm was a measure of investors' faith in the future of Indian industry. And it paid off



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handsomely. Total market capitalisation—the value of all the shares in the market—leaped from Rs 6,500 crore in 1980 to Rs 55,000 crore in 1989. There's a flip side, of course. Companies have diverted money raised for new projects to other uses. Fly-by-night operators have flourished. Nevertheless, the stock-markets seem to have matured at last.

Nearly as impressive as the rampage of the stock-market bull has been the relentless march of businessmen with no hoary business past to boast of. The most outstanding example was Dhirubhai Ambani and his Reliance Group. In 1980, Reliance was a Rs 200-crore company, with textiles its main business. Today, the group has expanded into synthetic yarn, petrochemicals and engineering, making it the nation's third largest business house (1988-89 sales: Rs 2,200 crore).

But if Ambani symbolised the industry's new aggressiveness, he also typified its seamier side—the industrialist-politician nexus. His business rivalry with Bombay Dyeing Chairman Nusli Wadia took on a deep political hue. And the arrest of a Reliance executive for conspiring to murder Wadia did nothing to dispel the shadows.

There were other success stories. The Maharashtra-based Dhoots of the Videocon group who started off in the mid-'80s with colour television sets and whose clutch of companies (claimed annual sales: Rs 250 crore) today turns out audio systems, VCRs, washing machines and will very soon manufacture colour picture tubes.

Then there was Karsanbhai Patel, who, midway through the '70s, began by whipping up a yellow detergent in his backyard and in the '80s built up Nirma into a Rs 600-crore company. A similar story is Shiv Nadar's. In the mid-'70s, he and six others put together Rs 1.75 lakh to launch a computer company called HCL, which is today the country's largest.

NAMAS BHOJANI

The Ambani-Wadia rivalry showed up the nexus between government and business and took on mafia-type dimensions.

"To achieve my objective, I'll say my *salaams* to anybody in government."
DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

(From left to right) Anil, Dhirubhai and Mukesh Ambani; (above) Wadia: bitter war

RAGHU RAI

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For those who have everything, something more.

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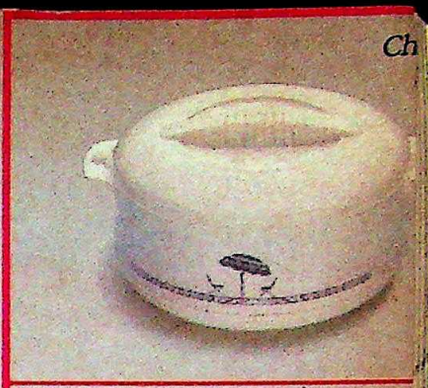
Softly softly. Father's home. The hungry gourmet is back from the late shift.

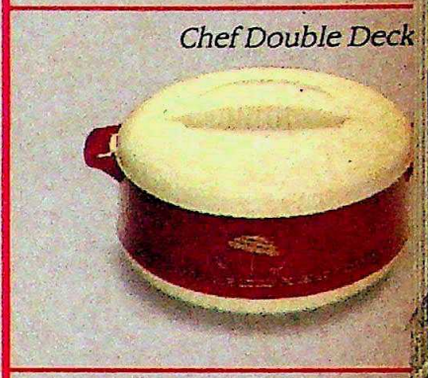
After another hard day of work. It's 1 am. He'll walk up the two storeys to the flat. In one hand, he's holding his briefcase, and the day's newspaper, crushed, in the other. And on his mind, he's got visions of lovely, steaming, hot delicious food. He is an uncompromising connoisseur of fine hot food, you know.

At the door, he'll fumble for the key as usual. In the dark. Because, of course, the lights are out.

Enters. Gently shuts the door. Tip-toes upto the dining table, to check out the fare Hyderabadi dal, with his favourite spices. A pulao with fresh green peas. Smells like it's come straight from the kitchen just this instant. Steaming.

Bless mother, who kept it all hot in a Cello HotPot.





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Satish Kaura made his first bid to enter the picture tube industry when it was still the preserve of the public sector. Now, his Samtel group has a big chunk of the black-and-white tube market, and has ventured into colour tubes. M.M. Kothari began with an investment of Rs 12,000—and lots of guts. Today, he is the country's 'pan masala king'—with annual sales at an impressive Rs 45 crore.

A vastly different act was being put on by the old business houses—the Birlas, the Shri Rams, the Singhanias, the Modis, the Bangurs. While the new entrepreneurs were cobbling together giant empires, these were busy dismantling theirs.

The Birlas set the trend. Soon after G.D. Birla died in 1983, the six branches of the family (combined assets: Rs 4,000 crore) proceeded to divide the empire in an amicable way.

In contrast, the Modi split was messy. Chairman K.N. Modi appealed to then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi to settle the dispute. The financial institutions intervened to insist on an early partition. The separation did not end after patriarch G.M. Modi's three sons parted ways with K.N. Modi's family. The three sons immediately showed signs of splitting among themselves.

The trifurcation in the Shri Ram Group followed roughly the same pattern. Here too, the intervention of the financial institutions prevented a messy battle. The decade saw the breaking up of other family businesses too: the Bangurs, the Singhanias (the most amicable), the Sarabhais, the Pauls. There was one remarkable exception—the Tatas. Despite bitter ego clashes and the fight for top slots, the empire remained stable though patriarch J.R.D. Tata handed over the reins to the untried Rattan Tata.

WHILE the big houses were splitting, other businessmen were erecting empires by a different technique: take-overs. First to strike was veteran take-over artiste Rama Prasad Goenka with the Ceat Tyres deal in 1982.

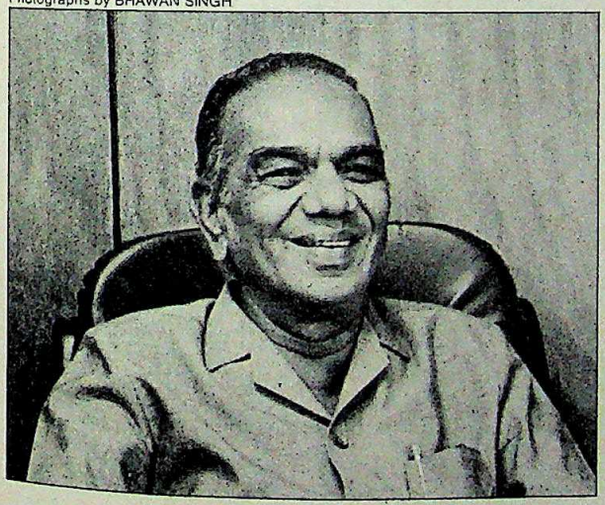
Far more celebrated—or infamous—was the 1983 take-over attempt of DCM and Escorts by NRI, Swraj Paul. The attempt finally fizzled out a year later after the Bombay High Court, in a landmark judgement, passed strictures on the financial institutions' role. But hopes that the judgement

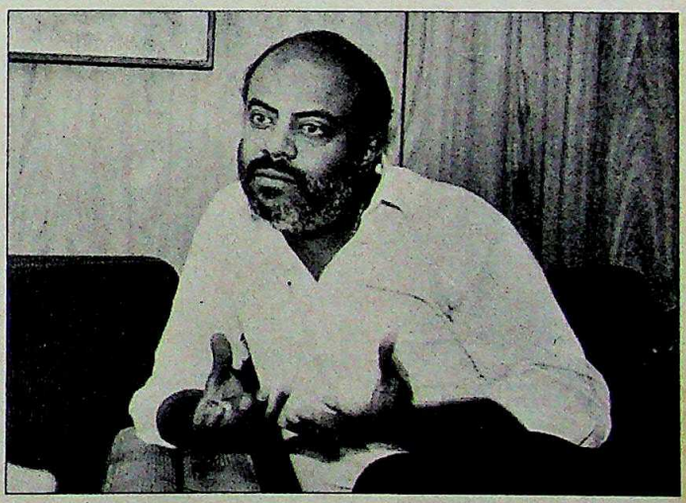
With no business past, but a lot of guts, a bevy of new entrepreneurs climbed to the top ranks of industry.

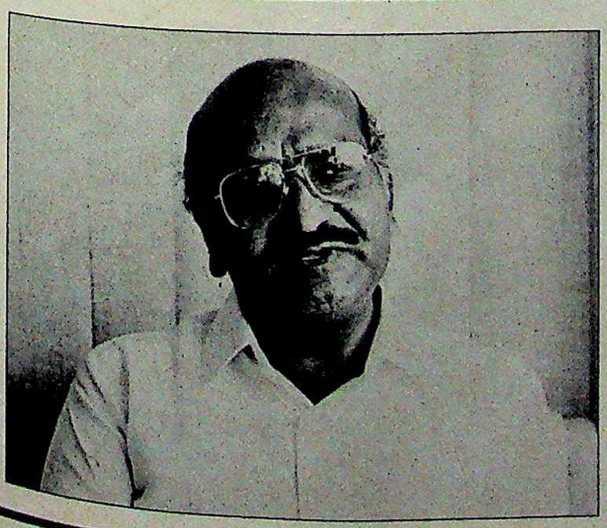
"If someone is willing to work day and night, I'll teach him to be successful."
M.M. KOTHARI

(Clockwise from below) Kothari; Nadar; Venugopal Dhoot; and Patel: the new millionaires

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH







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would help define the institutions' role in take-overs were belied. And at decade-end, the institutions again plunged into controversy by helping to pitch engineering giant Larsen & Toubro into the Ambanis' stable.

Swraj Paul may have retreated to foreign shores, licking his wounds. But another raider from abroad established his presence in India: Manohar 'Manu' Rajaram Chhabria, a retailer of Sony products in the Middle East. First, he teamed up with R.P. Goenka to pull off the Dunlop deal in 1984 and later edged out Goenka. Chhabria's Shaw Wallace deal of 1985 was a lot more controversial, because of the role of the financial institutions. They helped out—simply by not voting. Chhabria later went on to annex a host of other companies.

Another successful take-over artiste was Vijay Mallya who added a bevy of companies to his rechristened UB Group.

The dying months of the decade brought a glimmer of hope—in the form of Tata Tea's bid to take over Consolidated Coffee. Tata Tea made a public offer to the minority shareholders of Consolidated Coffee. Are such clean take-overs what the tea leaves foretell? No one seems to be sure. What everyone accepted was that take-overs were here to stay.

That new pragmatism, that recognition of changing times was felt in the world of labour too. Trade unions threw up a new breed of leaders free of ideological baggage.

THE decade started off badly for labour when the massive textile strike launched by Datta Samant in 1982 fizzled out 16 months and one million lost mandays later. And it ended with a long agitation by the workers of the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company, Pune, that was called off without the management conceding anything substantial. Both strikes typified the decade—a period when managements refused to keel over to labour. One management hope remained unfulfilled—productivity-linked wage settlements.

But there were gains for labour too. The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction, the country's corporate doctor, ruled that the Bombay-based Kamani Tubes, a sick company, should be handed over to a workers' cooperative. And inspired by the Kamani story, workers of other sick companies demanded to be part of the management.

A little more closeness between labour and management. A little less closeness between businessmen and politicians. A little more openness in the stock-markets and in take-over deals. That is the hope the '80s end with.

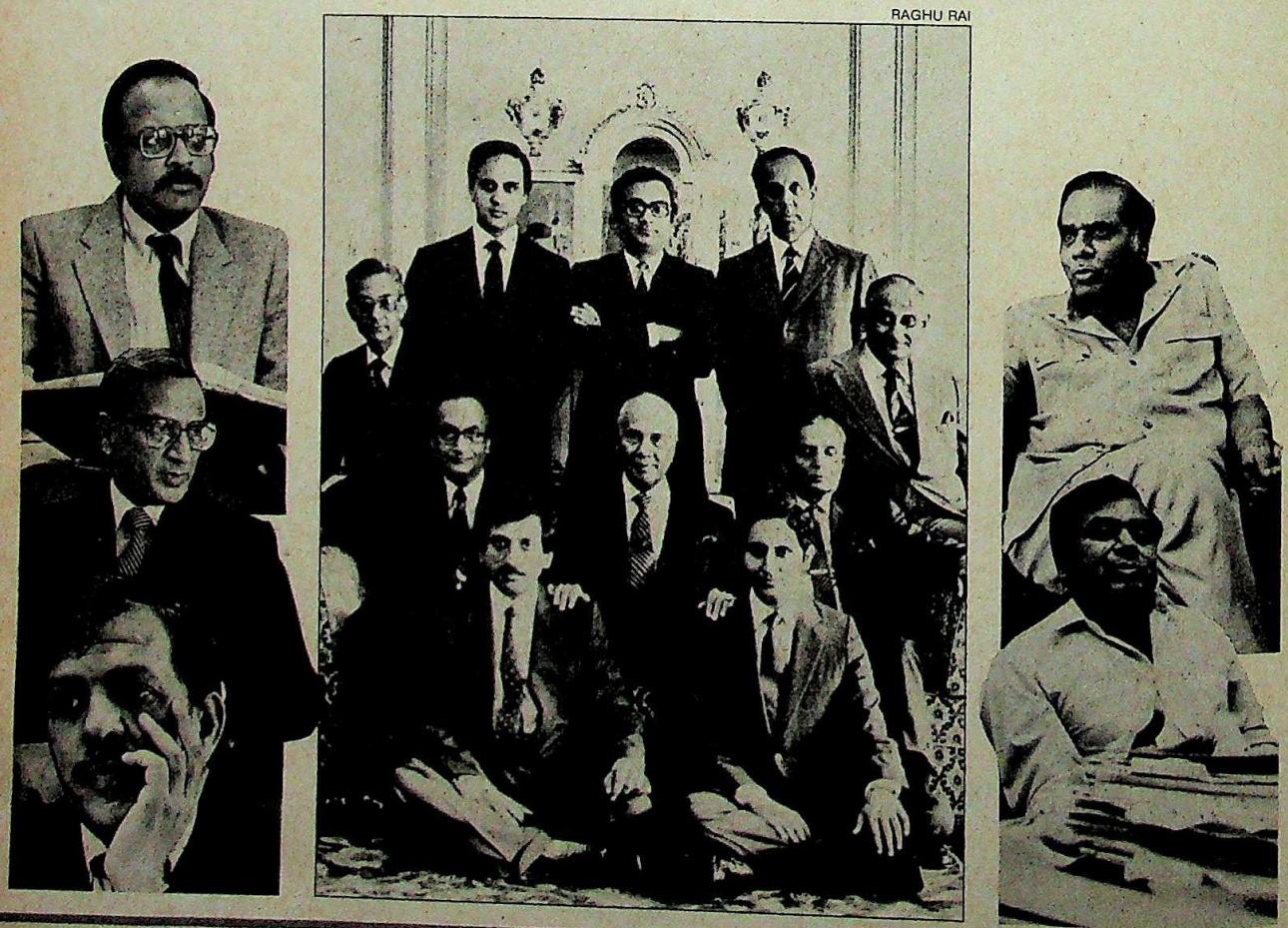
—S.N. VASUKI and SHIV TANEJA

Unable to resolve disputes among family members, several of the country's biggest business houses decided to split.

"At least the internecine warfare is over."
SIDDHARTH SHRIRAM
in 1987, two years before the final split.

(From left to right) the Shriram family; the Birlas; and the Modis: parting of ways

RAGHU RAI



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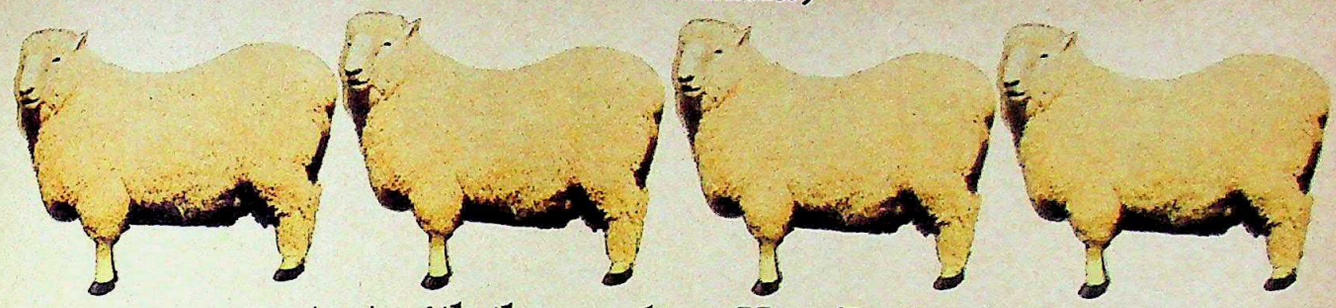

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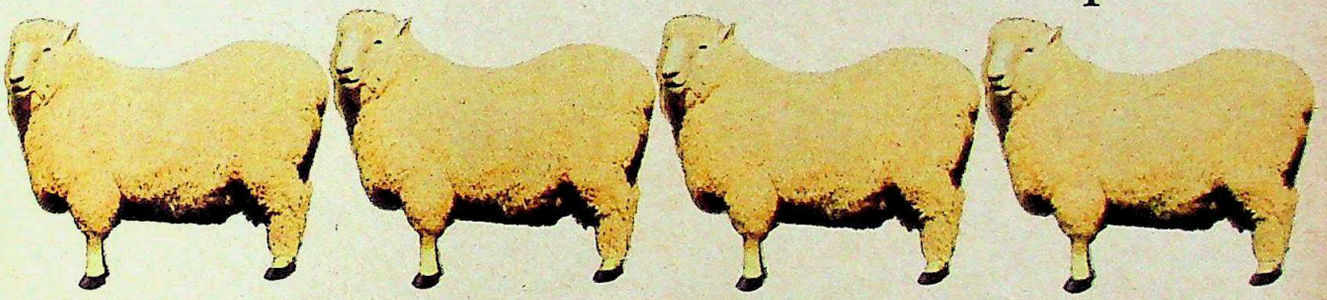

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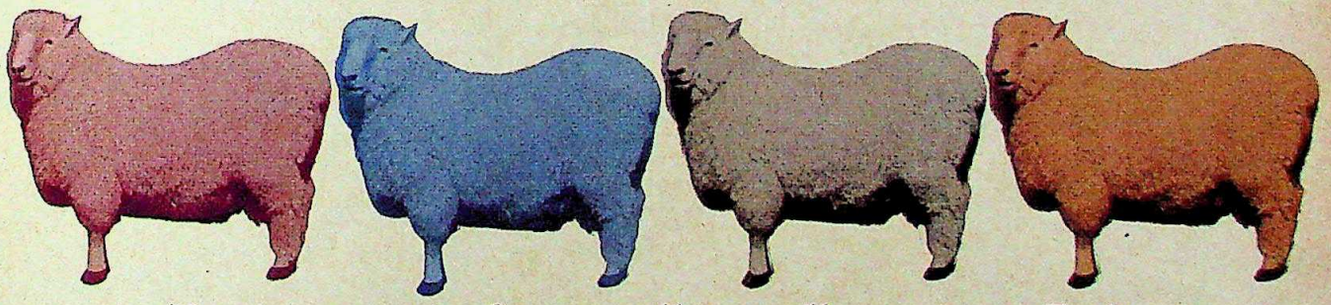

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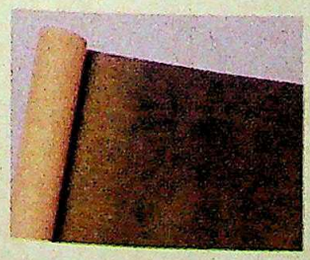
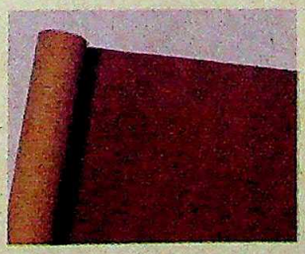
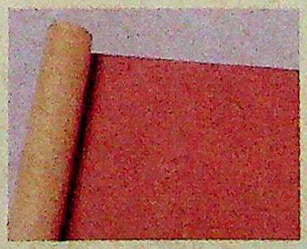
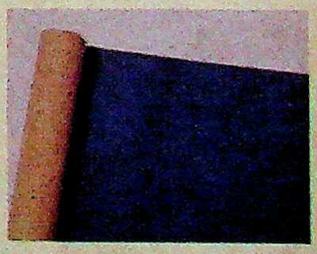

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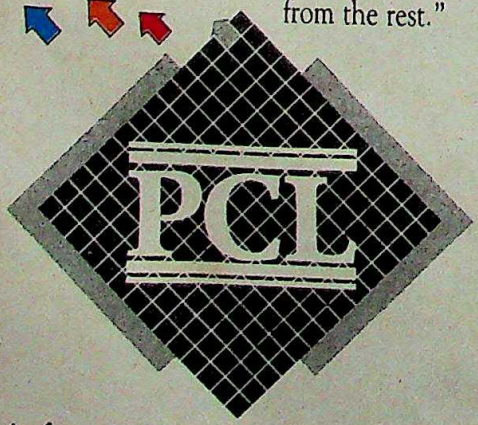

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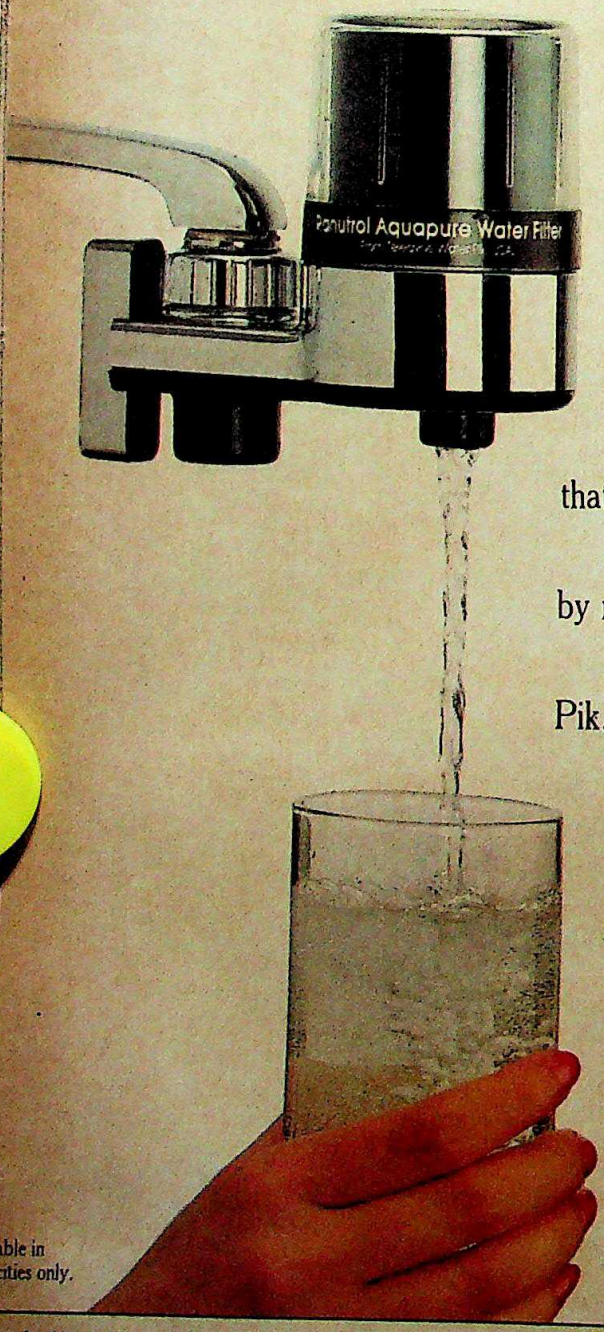

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Enterprise/DVAC

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The Urge to Splurge

The middle class says 'hello spending, goodbye thrift'

HI. My name's Ashok De. Call me Ash, if you like. I work as a sales manager in a public sector company. My wife, Babs (Babita), is a bank officer. Our daughter, Nisha, completed three in November. And we live in a nondescript two-bedroom flat. In short, there's nothing really unusual about us.

Except, as both Babs and I are realising, we belong to India's new "exciting" middle class of around 150 million people. We are supposed to be revolutionising this country by our urge to splurge. We are introducing a brash, new culture—not my words. And a recent *Time* magazine cover even called us the "Consumer Boomers".

Hell, I didn't know we were doing all this by simply buying what we thought we needed. It's difficult really to analyse your urges. But when I look back at the '80s, it's probably true. We have bought more things in these 10 years, than what my parents did in the past 30.

Take our refrigerator, for instance. When we bought it in 1983 it was a necessity. I remember in the early '70s when my parents scraped their bank balance and bought one, we were thrilled. When guests came, we would proudly ask them: "Can we serve you fridge water?" But it's no big deal having a refrigerator any more. Recently I read somewhere that a million of them are being sold annually in the country. Thrice the number when I bought one.

It was a logical decision to buy my motorcycle the next year. What with our rotten public transport. Although, I admit, I didn't know that I was contributing to a two-wheeler boom that would see 1.5 million vehicles being sold every year by 1988. And yes, come to think of it I was amazed by the choice available. Earlier one had to settle for a Lambretta, Vespa or a Jawa. But now with all these fancy Japanese bikes coming in, I could choose from a Hero Honda, TVS Suzuki, Escorts Yamaha or a Kawasaki Bajaj (Remember the ad: You could ride it even to the market-place). I took a bank loan and rode my Kawasaki to office.

Oh! I almost forgot. We picked up a television set too. And again there were so many brands to choose from. Like Babs said: "Choosing a television these days is like buying ice-cream—there are so many varieties available." And the box seems to be the great leveller. Our house help takes leave every Sunday because she wants to watch *Mahabharat*—on her TV.

Talking about house helps, you should see Babs' kitchen. Her proud possession is a cook-n-grill range. The moment it hit the market she threw out her gas stove. So too went the mixer-grinder with a pleading smile and: "Ash, what we really need is

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

As incomes grew and the goodies multiplied, the consumer lived for today.

"We're selling stereos like transistors. Even peons are buying them."
O.P. SHARMA
a Delhi shop owner

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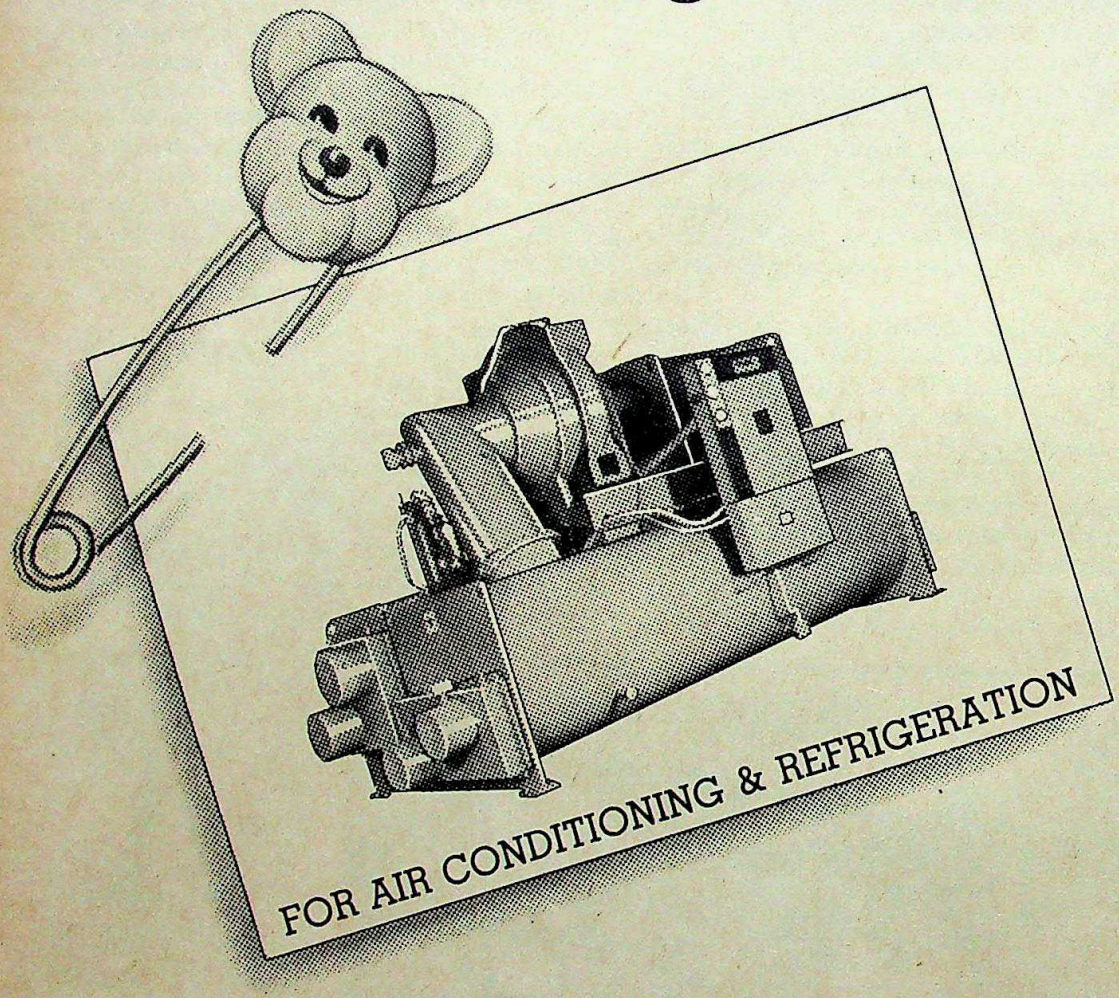
BLUE STAR

Blue Star's 50th Centrifugal Chiller...



...is a Johnson & Johnson baby, now.

It's a matter of great pride to see Blue Star's 50th Centrifugal Chiller roll out of our factory... into Johnson & Johnson's new factory at Aurangabad. The happy result of our engineering skills in air conditioning and refrigeration projects. And our painstaking efforts at building a superior product.

The Blue Star Centrifugal Chiller manufactured in collaboration with world leaders -York, USA -is open-type, compact, reliable and energy-efficient.

We've proved it 49 times over. All over the country. At DLF Plaza, IDBI Towers, Orissa Synthetics, Ciba Geigy, BEL, Shriram Fibres, Madras Airport... to name a few. Besides, we have orders for another 30 in hand.

You can be part of this family of happy customers.
Call on us.
It could be a small beginning to a great relationship.

BLUE STAR-YORK
AIR CONDITIONING • REFRIGERATION

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a food-processor to make my life easier." Somewhere on the shelves is an oven, an onion-shredder, a pop-up toaster and a melamine dinner set—all made in India, of course.

Now that's what has really changed. Before we used to buy even smuggled nail-cutters, just because it was foreign. Now when Babs and I go shopping we are flummoxed by the array of stuff available in the country. Two years ago, we picked up our stereo system and we could choose from Sony, Philips, Sonodyne, Akai Bush, and a dozen others. And they had the works: graphic equalisers, amplifiers, 300-watt speakers—all for prices that could match any imported system.

Babs and I had called an economist home for dinner the other night and we got chatting about what he called our "buying lust". He argued that much of the boom was a result of the Government liberalising its industrial policy and allowing foreign tie-ups in consumer goods. And he pointed out: "With both of you working, you now have more money to bust."

After dinner we moved to our drawing-room. Looking around, he said: "The old dream was to invest in a house. Now with real estate prices out of reach, people are picking up music systems, videos and the like instead." He watched Nisha's eyes light up when a host of advertisements started flashing on the television. Nodding his head wisely, he said: "That box is the biggest persuader."

Our friend may be right. Because when my father came to stay with us he asked in surprise: "Ash, where are you getting the money to buy all this? Aren't you saving anything?" He was shocked when I told him that things like my new colour television set and video recorder were bought on instalments that are so freely available these days. And that I purchased my second hand car recently with an office loan.

"Ash, in my days we took a loan only to build a house. And I put at least 30 per cent of my salary into a bank," said my father, with concern. I didn't have the heart to tell him of my plan to flog my car soon and pick up a Maruti car—with a lot of help from my bank. Nor of our proposed holiday at Manali—our third in five years.

My father just would not understand. His generation lived for tomorrow. In the '80s, I think, we decided to live for today. Even if it was on credit.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Yesterday's luxuries became today's necessities and credit ruled the market.

"Today you have to rethink the concept of who is rich and who is poor."

RAHUL BAJAJ
chairman, Bajaj Auto

We have not exploited even a quarter of the potential of the consumer market.

D.L. JAIN
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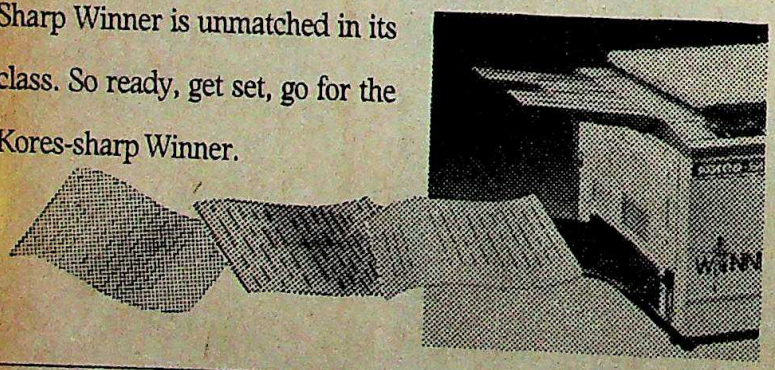
Yes, for unbeatable value for money, the Kores-Sharp Winner is unmatched in its class. So ready, get set, go for the Kores-sharp Winner.



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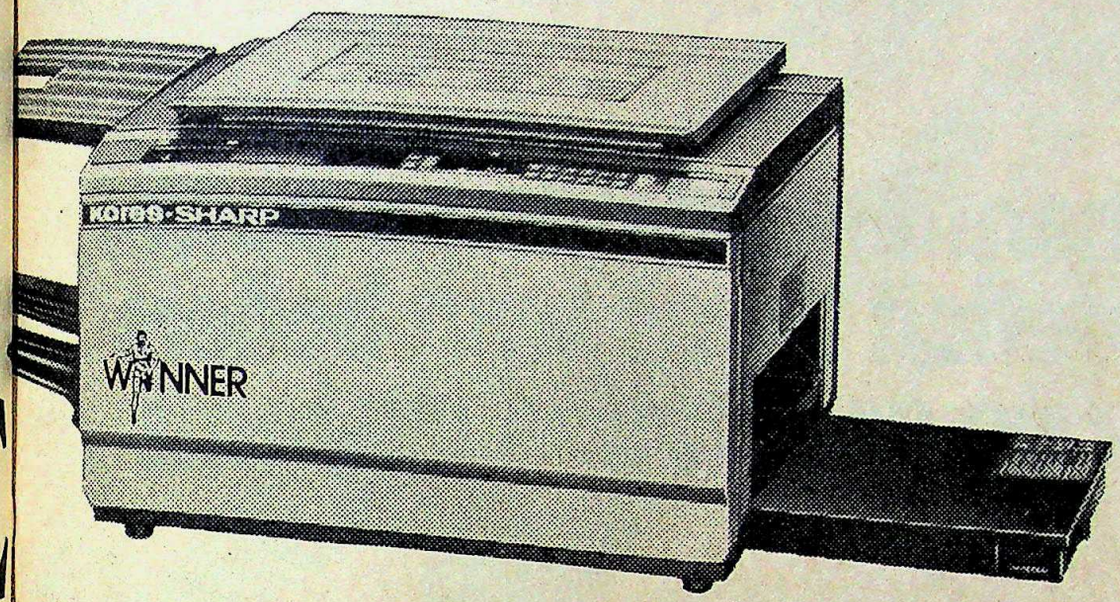

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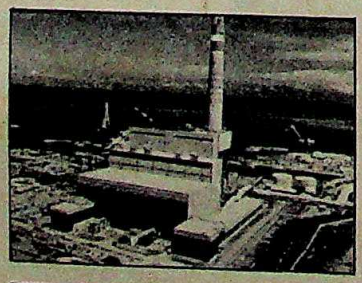

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A Burst of Colour

High tech, sponsorship and political manipulation transform the medium

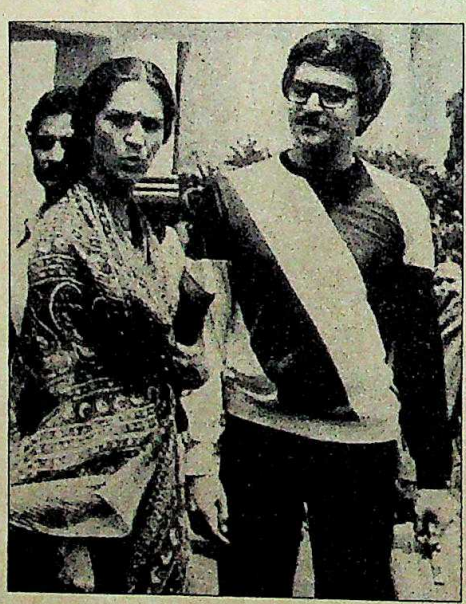
THERE'S the flamboyant Ram Jethmalani—his shirt torn, his *banyan* in tatters—he has just been beaten up by Chandra Shekar's men. Devi Lal is talking about booths being captured. The booth-capturers proudly tell Nalini Singh how they do it. Arun Nehru wonders why the National Front's victories are being telecast so slowly. The editor of *Sunday* calls Rajiv Gandhi a "crook".

For most of the decade, however, that wasn't the picture on Doordarshan. But for a few days after the election results began coming in late November, television turned truant. Truth invaded the little screen with a cyclonic force that it almost began to look like fiction. "How can we match this in our films?" asks movie and television moghul G.P. Sippy.

The days when Prannoy Roy and Vinod Dua had the nation in their grip—television now has an area reach of nearly 80 per cent, and viewership of well over 100 million—were perhaps, trailers of what might be store in the coming days of promised autonomy. The curtain came down at the end of the decade. Now its interval time: backstage, the new stagehands have begun the stocktaking.

But all this might well prove to be illusory. What it highlights is the distance television has travelled in this decade when it also became a golden goose: in 1981, advertisements brought in Rs 4 crore; last year, it was Rs 200 crore. If anything, this has been the decade of television.

Flashback to the turn of the '80s. It is another country, another time. The staple diet is *Krishi Darshan*, aired five times a week and guaranteed to put you to sleep. Its viewership is less than 4 per cent. The high point is *Phool Khilen Hain Gulshan Gulshan*—a film-based talk show compered by the ever-ebullient Tabassum—with a viewership of 83 per cent in Bombay and nearly 70 per cent in Delhi. *Chitrahaar* is top gun, proving that



(Clockwise from left) Priya Tendulkar and Karan Razdan in *Rajni;* a scene from *Nukkad;* and the *Hum Log* cast: soap era

The revolution took place with the introduction of soap operas. And as entertainment took over, Mandi House mandarins realised that there was no business like show business.

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television is only piggybacking on popular cinema.

In fact, the scenario showed no hint of change at the beginning of the decade with the small screen little more than All India Radio with a few stills thrown in and a spill over from dull Films Division documentaries.

And then, in 1982, the tele-scene breaks into colour. It's Asiad time: a magic wand transforms its tackiness into a Cinderella. "Colour was just a metaphor for a switchover to high technology," says Bhaskar Ghose, former director-general of Doordarshan. Soon, Doordarshan entered the phase of networking. In 1982, the number of television transmitters jumped from 35 to 100. And as the decade changes they are about to cross the 400 mark.

But hardware was not all. The real revolution—accelerating the consumer boom already taking place in a more upbeat India—was the introduction of sponsored programmes. India got its first home-brewn soap opera in 1982 with *Hum Log*. With it, an addicted television audience was born. Mexico-inspired, it was to have been a vehicle to transmit the message of family planning in 154 easy sugar-coated doses. But entertainment overtook it. Mandi House mandarins soon realised that there was no business like show business.

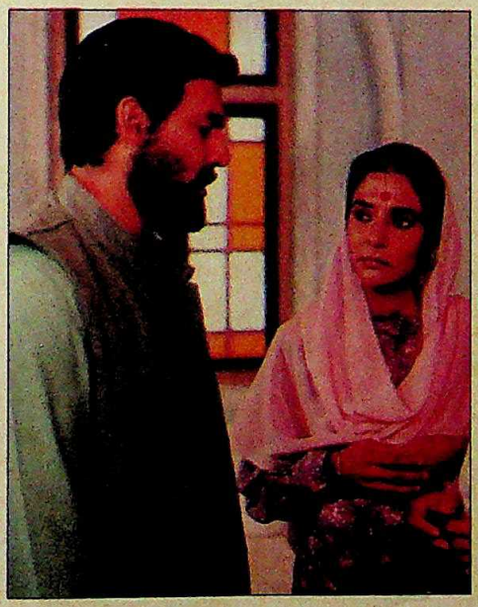
India became voyeuristic: the *Hum Log* people became the nation's first family: the trials and tribulations of Dadiji, Bhisheshwar Lal, Majli became the nation's concern, explains Manohar Shyam Joshi, who scripted the serial.

But *Hum Log* had too much of a home video look about it. Enter Sridhar Kshrisagar's *Khandaan*, an elegantly crafted but indegenised *Dynasty* which revolved round an industrialist's family. The age of the television star was born: Neena Gupta, Shekhar Kapur and Shriram Lagoo became larger than life personalities. When Doordarshan threw open the door to entertainment, comedy pushed itself in. Soon there was Kundan Shah's *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* and Jalal Agha's *Mr Ya Mrs.*

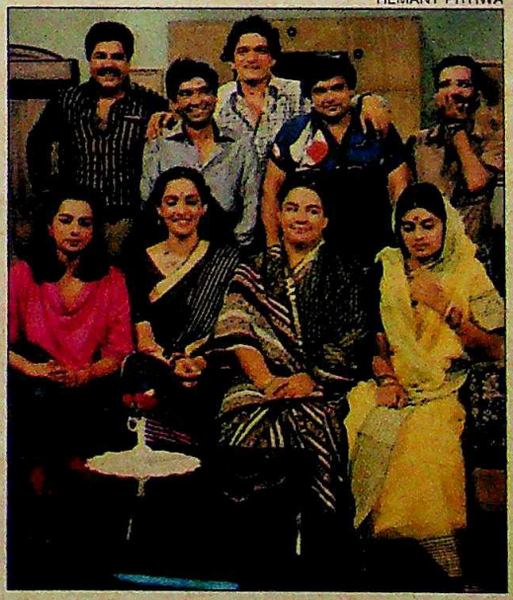
By the mid-'80s, Doordarshan, was drawing in the titans of the celluloid world. G.P. Sippy and son Ramesh Sippy made *Buniyaad*, which emptied the streets on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border. Anita Kanwar and Alok Nath—playing Lajoji and Masterji in the serial—went straight to the Punjabi heart. Meanwhile, the queues at Mandi House got longer, the tales of corruption more horrendous, and the exodus from Bombay more intense.

Next came Ramanand Sagar and B.R. Chopra and the age of the electronic epics was born. The *Ramayan*, India's first religious soap, may have looked like moving calendar art but it almost set the Ganga on fire. Ramanand Sagar was taking processions through the Hindi heartland as if he were the incarnation of Tulsi Das. With the *Mahabharat*, it seemed as if nothing else mattered. The nation stopped in its tracks at that hour. Serious film makers

(Clockwise from right) A still from *Buniyaad*; the *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* team; and a scene from *Tamas*: memorable



HEMANT PITHWA



"Now TV has become like wall paper. It's just there, on."
SRIDHAR KSHRISAGAR

"TV swept Rajiv into power in 1984. Its misuse swept him out in 1989."
KETAN MEHTA

"Cinema is like an ageing whore. But there is a new bitch in town, TV and video."
MAHESH BHATT

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Perhaps the reason why CMC is a leadi is because it is willing

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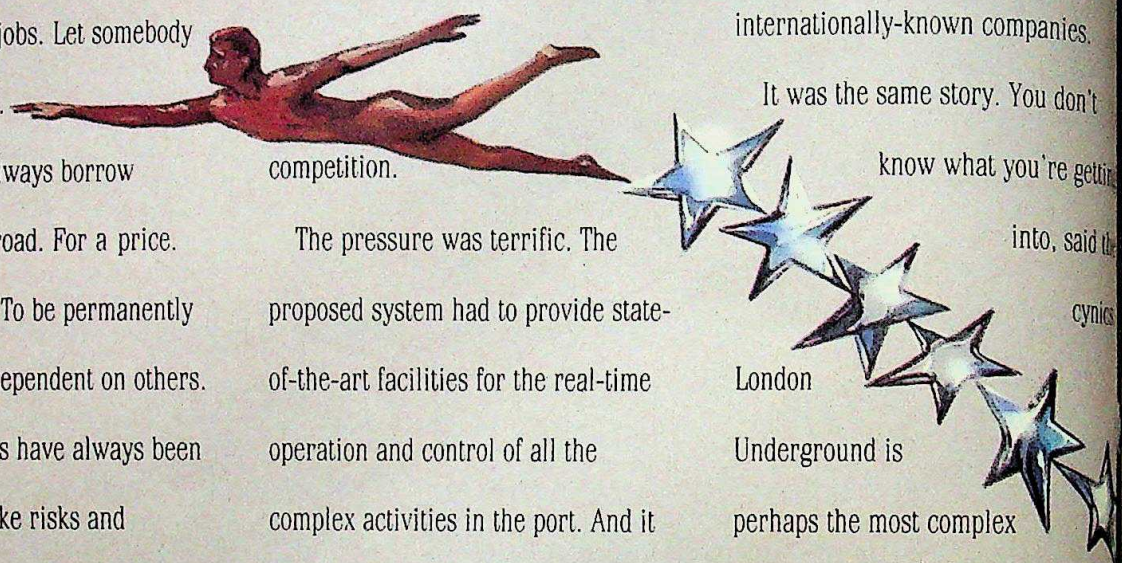
The temptations to play it safe are almost irresistible. There is good money in routine jobs. Let somebody else take the risks. Besides, we can always borrow knowhow from abroad. For a price. And what a price. To be permanently handicapped and dependent on others.

CMC's objectives have always been clearly defined. Take risks and develop technological muscle by getting into areas of information technology where other Indian companies will not venture.

The result is that almost every major job we have done has been a trail-blazer, undertaken for the first time in India.

Take the case of the World Bank-funded Jawaharlal Nehru Port at Nhava Sheva, for instance. In 1987 the Nhava Sheva Port Trust floated a global tender for a computerized Container Terminal Management System. We won this prestigious contract against international competition.



The pressure was terrific. The proposed system had to provide state-of-the-art facilities for the real-time operation and control of all the complex activities in the port. And it had to go on stream in 41 weeks.

41 weeks to complete such a mammoth and complex job? You must be out of your mind, people said. At least get some foreign help and go in for readymade software.

We did nothing of the sort. We relied entirely on our own resources. We procured and installed the hardware. We prepared the computer site. And we developed the software in India, from scratch. In 41 weeks.

In 1988, we won the contract to design a Train Scheduling System for London Underground Limited. The competition included a number of internationally-known companies.

It was the same story. You don't know what you're getting into, said the cynics. London Underground is perhaps the most complex urban transportation system in the world. The deadline is very, very tight.

Let's cut a long story short. We completed Phase I, the creation of a detailed design document, in May '88 on schedule. We're now designing the software in India. The system will be tested and implemented in the U.K. by June 1990.

The people at the Port of Felixstowe in England saw our work at Nhava Sheva, and immediately asked us to design a Ship Discharge and Load Planning System for their port.

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force in information technology today
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What better proof of the quality of our work than to get orders from the advanced countries? But for CMC that's no big deal. What we never forget is that our mission is to continually venture into the unknown, into new and unexplored fields.

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All of them firsts for an Indian company. Just like the integrated Mine Management System we're supplying to Gevra Mines, or the system we're currently designing for the country's biggest and busiest stock exchange in Bombay.

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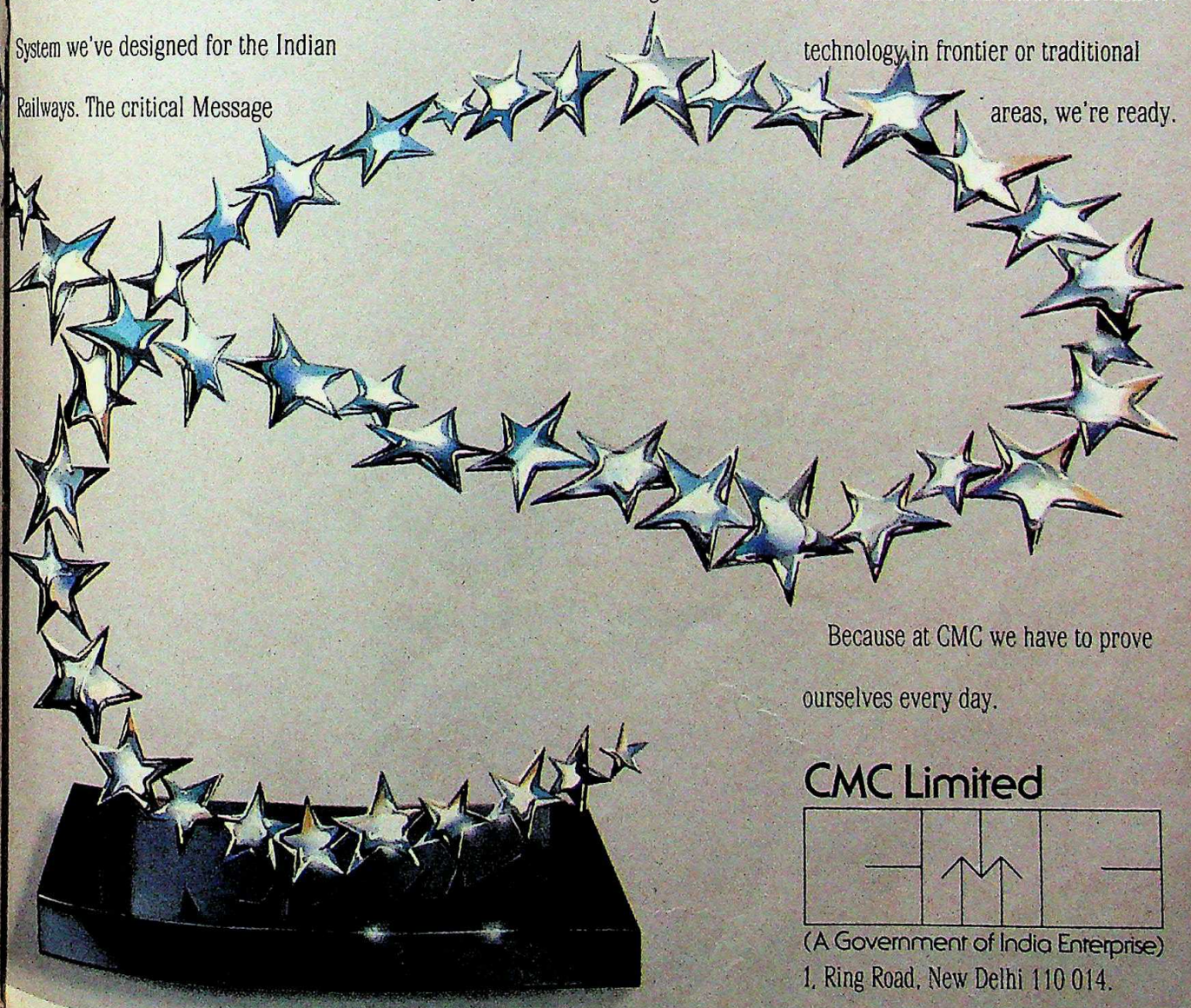

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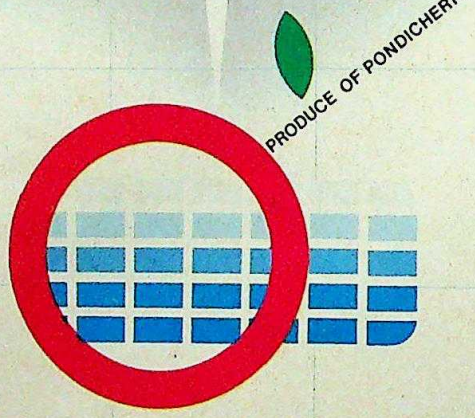

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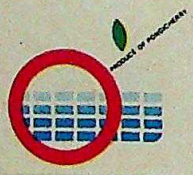

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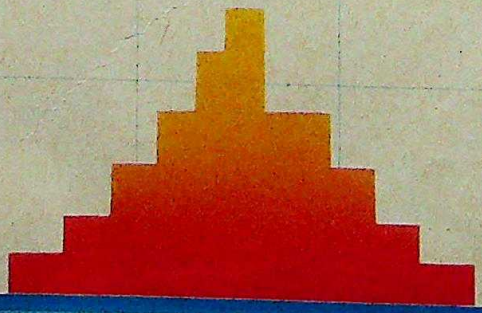

QUALITY

AURA DESIGN

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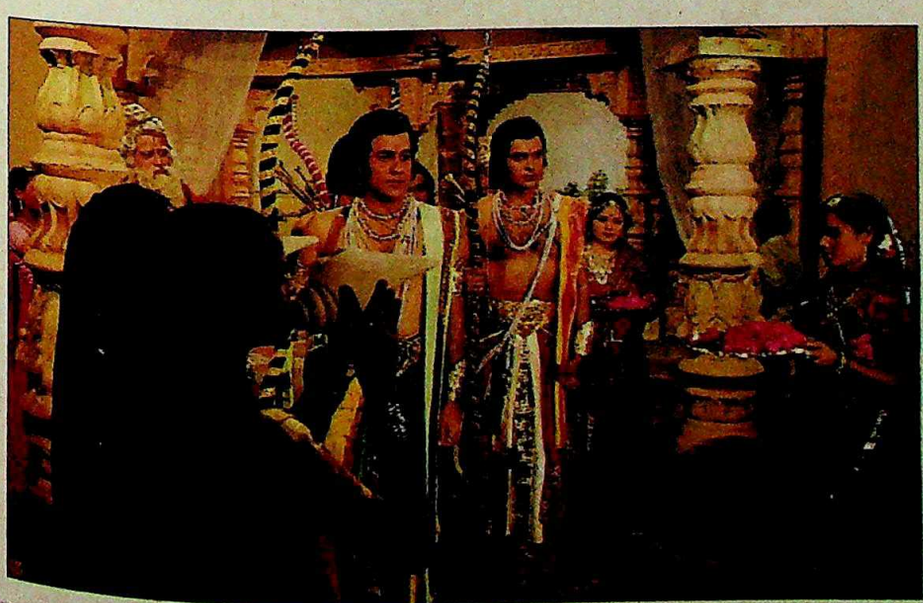
also heard television's siren call: Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Saeed Mirza, Govind Nihalani, Ketan Mehta, and even Satyajit Ray. But soon enough, the little screen proved to be a stumbling block for some. "The rebels of yesterday became the television capitalists of today," complains film producer Suresh Jindal. "Television became a large-scale celebration of mediocrity," says Nihalani. Gradually, television began to lose some of its magic, its mesmeric effect. The initially aloof audience of the pre-colour, pre-soap era, which had become television addicts, began to withdraw a bit in the late '80s. "No longer was the day engineered to revolve around programmes," says Kshirsagar.

Television stars saw birth and death with increasing frequency. Even Ram was forgotten when Krishna and Arjun came into the tube. But televison managers proved more durable. The television millionaires came of age: Prannoy Roy, Vinod Dua, Siddhartha Basu and Manju Singh gained both fame and fatter bank accounts.

There were fresh, bold breezes too. Fresh serials like Saeed Mirza's popular *Nukkad* and *Intezaar*. There was *Rajni*, whose protagonist—a fiery housewife played by Priya Tendulkar—took up day to day problems of the man on the street. Memorable was Nihalani's *Tamas*, the dramatisation of Bhisham Sahni's novel about Partition. The small screen spilled to life. There were riots. Fundamentalists from both extreme Hindu and Muslim organisations attacked Doordarshan.

AFTER the first coming of Rajiv Gandhi, current affairs finally got some electricity. *Janvani* had awkward questions fired at visibly uncomfortable ministers. *Aajkal* talked about issues usually under a bulging carpet. The breeze blew stronger when Bhaskar Ghose took over as the captain of Doordarshan in 1986. The big newspaper groups put their toes



Scene from *Mahabharat* (top); and *Ramayan:* national addiction

With the religious soaps, the age of the electronic epics was born.

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in the door: *Newsline* from the *Anand Bazar Patrika* stable with M.J. Akbar on screen. The Times Group also started a television company. Doordarshan brought in outside producers and the rollercoaster began.

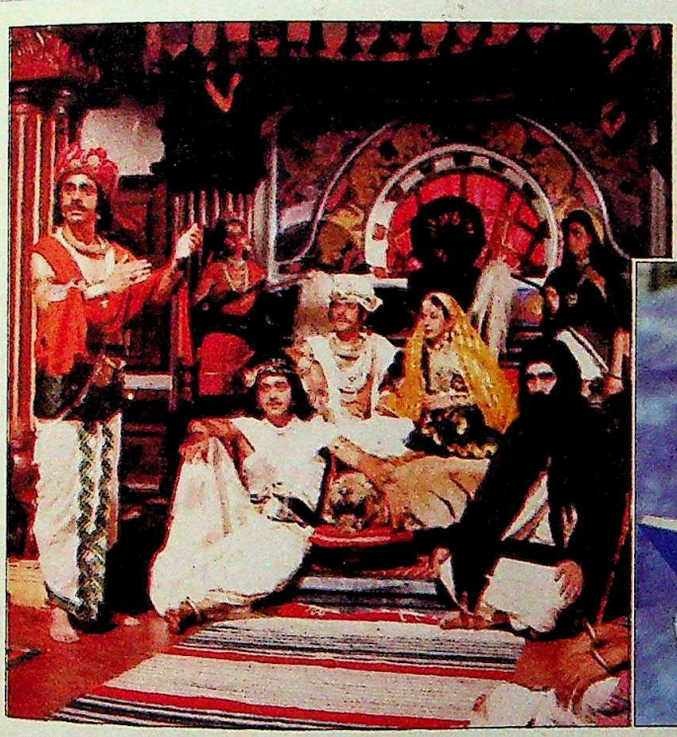
Director Ramesh Sharma, whose *New Delhi Times* never made it to the screen as promised, actually had Jyoti Basu in his programme on the GNLF saying: "Why should I tell lies? I am not a Congressman." Sashi Kumar of PTI TV produced a programme on the Sri Lanka problem. There were other different, bold strokes.

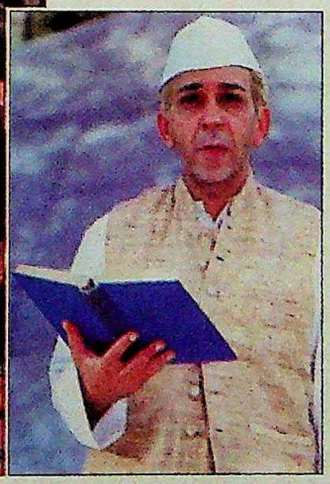
But then somewhere in 1988, the honeymoon began to sour. When things started going wrong in the political arena, the realpolitik began. "Doordarshan had always been a propaganda arm of the Government. But it became a cat's paw. It was actually swiping," says Sashi Kumar. By autumn that year, Ghose was out. K.K. Tewari began to use television as a Howitzer gun to blast the Opposition. From the Prime Minister's Office, G. Parthasarathy and Mani Shankar Aiyar were calling the shots.

Then came the sophisticated, yuppie programming. The subliminal message as Madison Avenue would have it. Patriotism was the Trojan horse. The heart-tugging beautifully made short films. *Ek Sur* and *Mile Sur*—the sportsman running with freedom torches had the nation in tears. The series of *Mera Bharat Mahan* spots were also well made. And *Bharat Ek Khoj* kept the Nehru name on screen for over a year.

But then came the over-kill. The irony is that television is what made Rajiv. It also unmade him. The message became the tedium. By decade-end, Doordarshan was consigned to an uncertain limbo with the new Government pledged to autonomy, yet unsure of where to start. But eventually, the power of television may prove too tempting for any government to give up control. That was the ultimate message of the medium in the '80s.

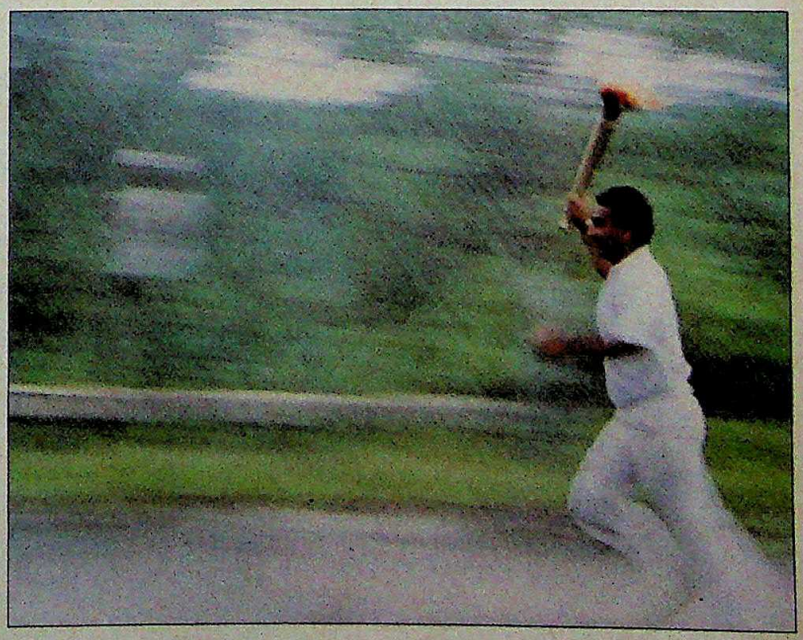
—MADHU JAIN





(Clockwise from left) Scene from *Bharat Ek Khoj*; Roshan Seth; Gavaskar in *Ek Sur*; a *Mera Bharat Mahan* spot; and Bhimsen Joshi in *Mile Sur*

Then came the sophisticated and yuppie programming. Patriotism was the subliminal message of the heart-tugging spots.



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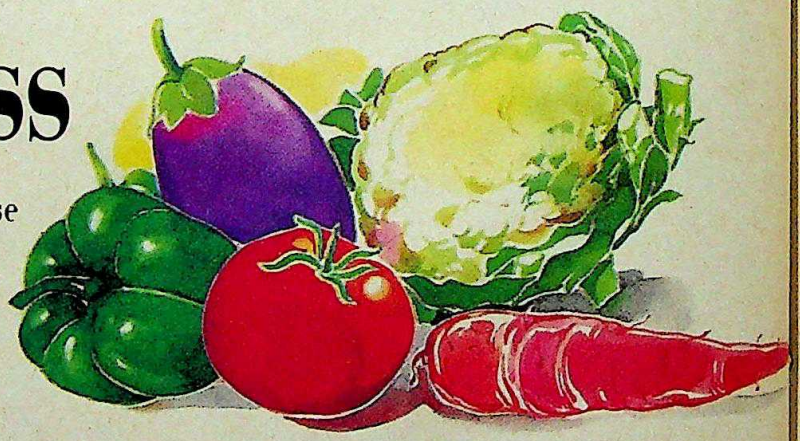

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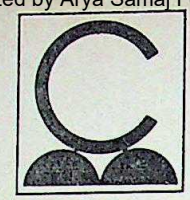
1930's

1940's


1980's

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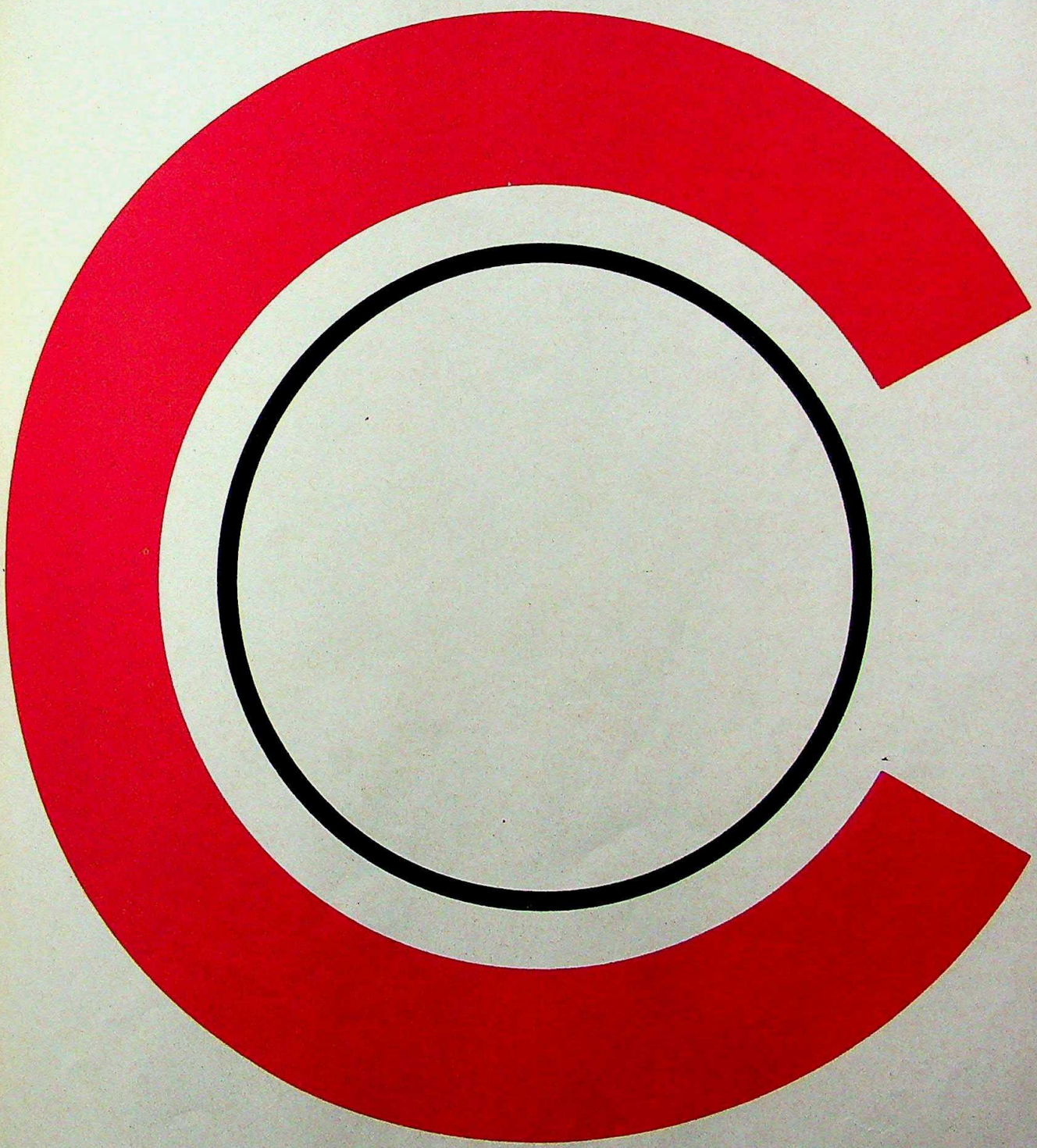

The letter 'C' symbolises Coates' core business, surface coatings. Spreading around a graphic globe.

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Triumph, Trauma and Tears

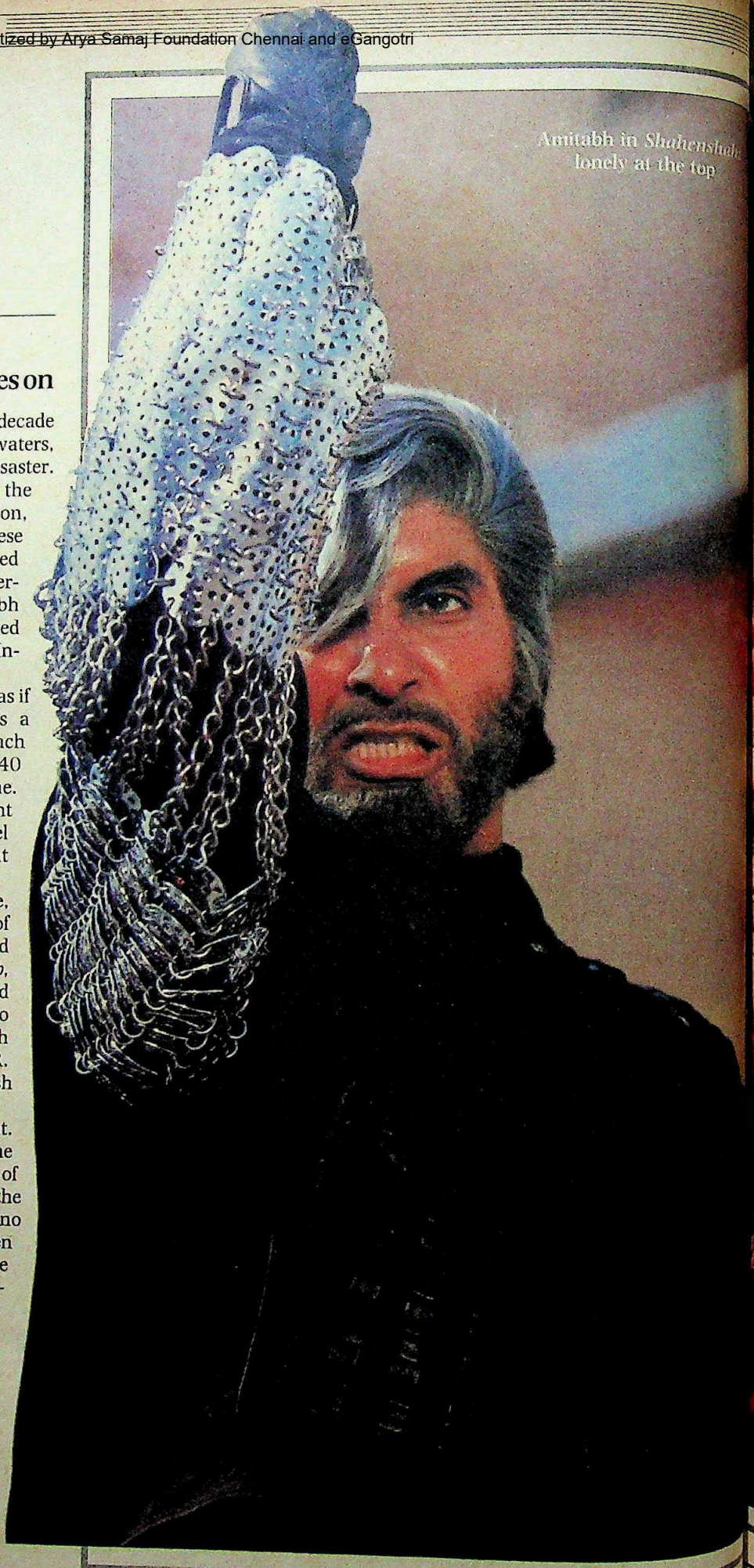
The hegemony of films is challenged, but the show goes on

CINEMA moved through the last decade like an ocean liner over troubled waters, ever just a wave away from disaster. Torpedoed by video piracy, rattled by the small screen and runaway inflation, weighed down by an increasingly obese multi-star system and the debris of flopped films, and rocked by the dumping overboard of its star captain, Amitabh Bachchan, the film industry blundered through the most turbulent decade of Indian cinema.

Yet, the partying on board went on as if there were no tomorrow. There was a *mahurat* a day. Stars signed films as if each producer was the last on earth: nearly 140 Hindi films were made in 1989 alone. Money kept pouring in, the once-dormant studios worked round the clock and tinsel town became crowded with new bright young things.

The '80s began on a bouyant note, coinciding as it did with the golden age of Amitabh Bachchan. Nothing he touched could go wrong: *Ram Balram, Naseeb, Namak Halal, Lawaaris, Yarana, Mard* and *Coolie*. But then midway the boat began to rock. Megablock-busters heralded with great fanfare, like Sippy's *Shaan*, B.R. Chopra's *Burning Train*, and Yash Chopra's *Silsila* collapsed.

Suddenly, nothing seemed to go right. Big was no longer beautiful. Even the revenge-laced, epic-inspired formula of lost and found, which underwrote the Bachchan persona and his clones, no longer worked. Finally, when even Bachchan could not get a film off the ground—*Mahaan, Pukaar, Gireftar*—panic set in. The video invasion—the "AIDS of the film industry" according to Manmohan Desai—took its toll. The hegemony which the film industry had as mass entertainer for the last 40 years was suddenly over. Says actor-director Shekhar Kapur: "Since the last five years middlemen have been putting together commercial proposals: big names and the number of names is what matters in this broker-oriented industry."



Amitabh in *Shahenshah*: lonely at the top

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Invasion of starlings: instant glory

Elbowed out by a swarm of young heroes and starlings in the late '80s, Amitabh Bachchan still cast a shadow across popular cinema.

"God is great, Amitabh is back.
Banner in Bombay after Amitabh recovered from his operation

There is only one *mard* in India: Amitabh Bachchan.
MANMOHAN DESAI

I'm sick and tired of rain, waterfall and wet sequences.
MANDAKINI

These starlets are like hybrid wheat; they have none of the sweetness of *desi kanak* actresses had 20 years ago.
DHARMENDRA"

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The downslide into the era of the video director was complete. Film makers watched videos of B-grade Hollywood films and transformed them into Hindi films. Inspiration had degenerated into imitation. The string of movies like *Commando, Zakhmi Aurat, Khoon Bhari Maang*...were almost xerox-copies of B-grade foreign films.

The director took a back seat while dance and fight directors grabbed the baton. Fight directors began to choreograph the increasing number of rape scenes. "Films began to have multiple villains to take on the multiple heroes and heroines. So, each of us got to rape someone," explains Gulshan Grover, a villainy-and-rape specialist. Even the distributor came into the picture: he demanded a minimum number of fight and rape scenes. The story, as such, disappeared.

THE audience also changed. Much of the gentile class had retreated to the comfort of television and video. Left in the cinema halls were the children of the mean streets. By the second half of the '80s, Bachchan had become a caricature of his earlier self: in *Ganga Jamuna Saraswati* he is reduced to robotic inanities, vying for screen time with cobras and crocodiles. He also began to show his age. And the formula in which Manmohan Desai and Prakash Mehra had straitjacketed him went stale. The two moghuls were overtaken by a new breed of brash young directors like N. Chandra, Rajiv Rai and Mansoor Husain.

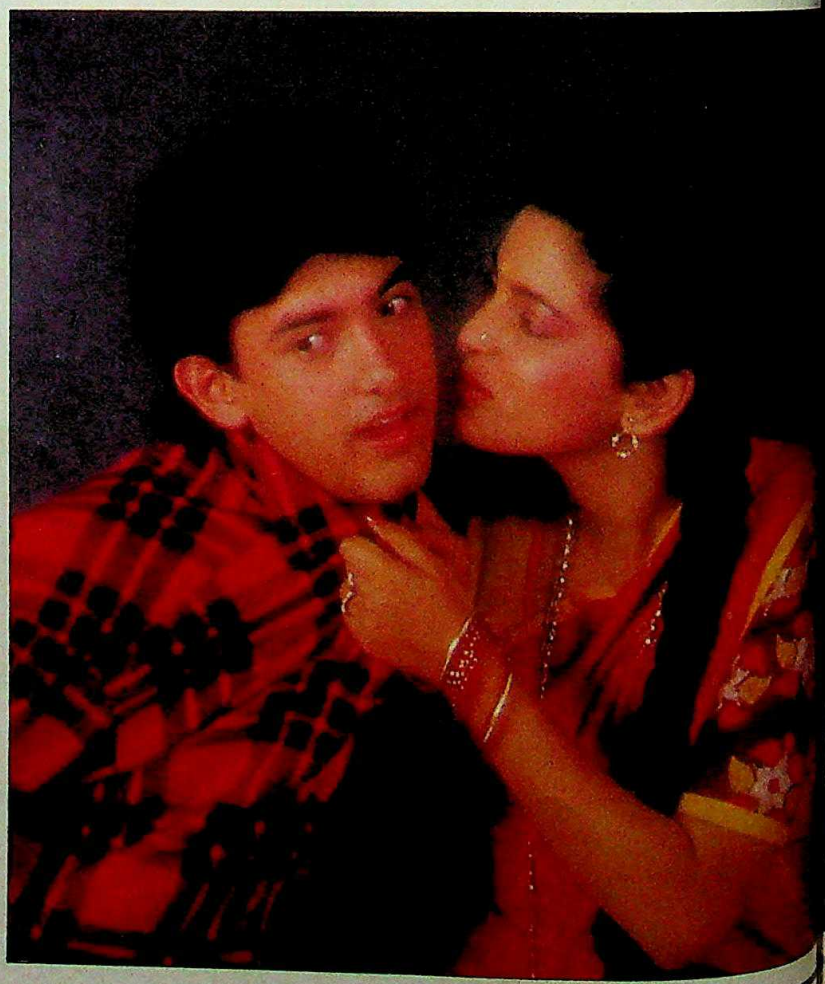
Cinema demanded a different kind of film maker for the hard '80s, an age which had no heroes. N. Chandra, the young director who grew up in the mean streets of Worli, brought raw realism to the screen. He came at the right time. His low budget, starless *Ankush* and *Pratighaat* did well, and with *Tezaab* he registered a hat trick. The presence of Anil Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit and the mesmeric *Ek, do, teen* were not the only reasons for the phenomenal success of the film.

Chandra articulated urban hungers. *Ankush* portrayed the volcanic frustrations of unemployed youth. In *Pratighaat* the protagonist takes on the establishment itself as embodied in the politician-*goonda*. In *Tezaab*, the hungers are glamorised, but it is still the establishment the reluctant hero takes on.

"It is anybody's game now," says Rajiv Rai, the young director whose film *Tridev* was one of last year's biggest hits. "The '80s killed the hero: a person like Amitabh Bachchan can't reign in the '90s." In a decade devoted to action and vendetta of the bloodlust kind, the heroine was reduced to the hero's side-kick. A pretty and sexy backdrop to the hero's heroics. The vamp in fact disappeared alogether: the heroine took over her role. "The heroine has become what Helen was in the '50s and '60s," says Shashi Kapoor. "Now, it's all cabaret."

But intermittently, the audience was offered the gun-toting Exterminating Angel,

(Clockwise from above) Dimple and Rishi in *Saagar*; Sridevi in *Chandni*; Mandakini in *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* and Aamir Khan and Juhi Chawla in *QSQT*: return of romance



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There was also romance in the time of action-packed vendetta films. Now and then a simple love story hit the jackpot.

"Romance can never go out of fashion. It is there for ever. You only have to make a good film."
YASH CHOPRA

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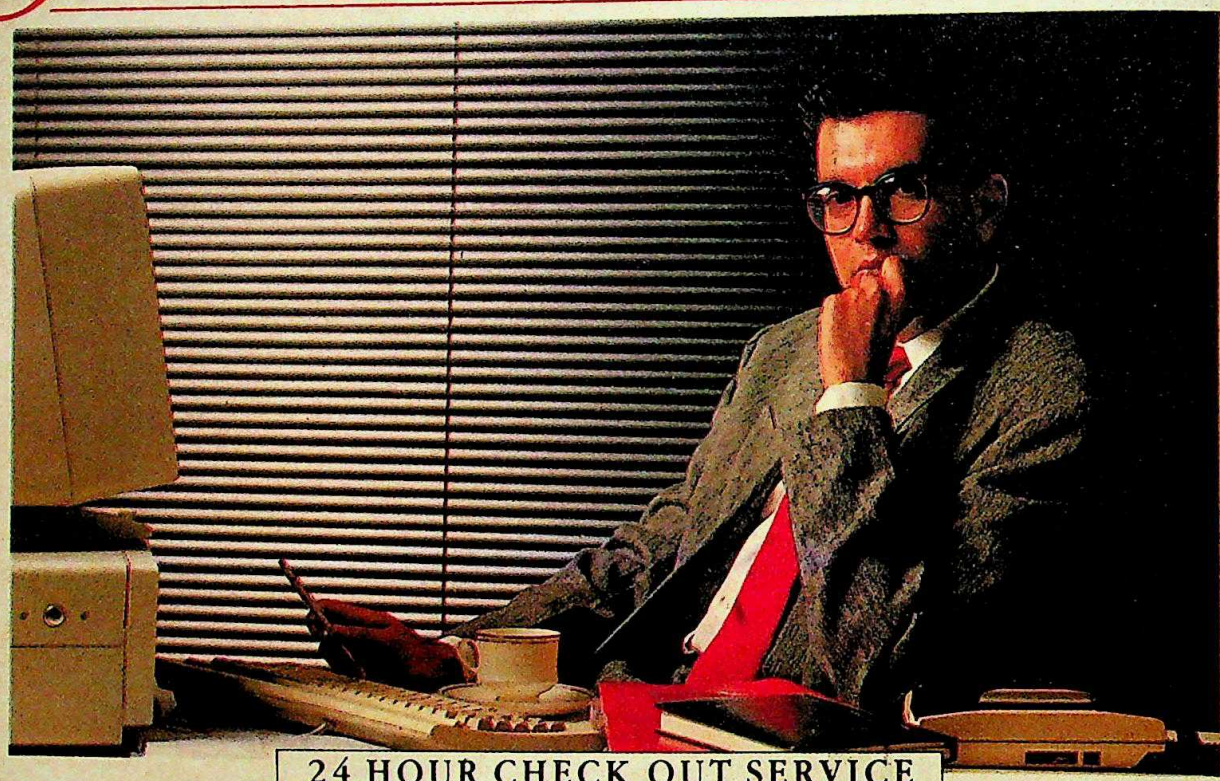

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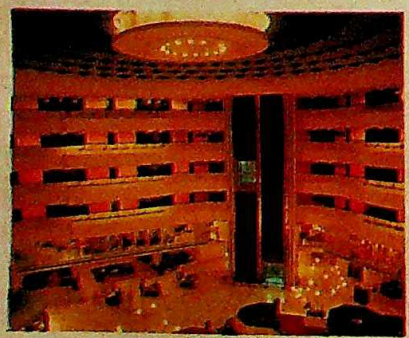

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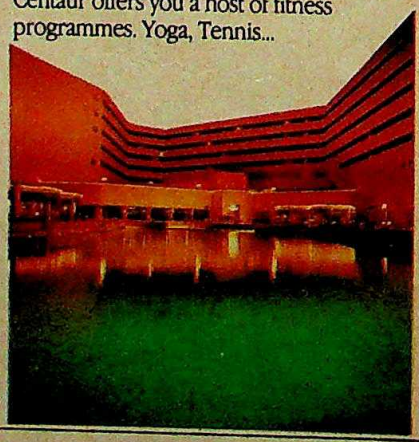

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who came to Indian cinema strangely enough through B-grade imported films. Sridevi, Dimple Kapadia, Rekha, Amrita Singh, Mandakini, often became the protagonist fighting the forces of evil. "This is a combination of women's lib and the age-old veneration of the mother goddess," explains Saryu Doshi, art historian and member of the Censor Board. Latter-day *kalis* in black leather *(Khoon Bhari Maang, Zakhmi Aurat, Sherni,* and now *Bhrashtachar)* walked all over the screen. And in doing so provided the other side of the coin to the ever-suffering Sati-Savitri image which had dominated the Indian screen.

Madhuri, Anil and Kiran in *Tezaab*

THE heroine also lost many inhibitions during the decade. Sexuality pushed aside sensuality. "Sexuality has moved to the forefront after being suppressed or sublimated," says film director Ketan Mehta. "The heroine can now make a pass." What Meena Kumari or Nargis said with a glance, their successors said with their legs and a lot else. The '80s' starlings—Kimi Katkar, Sangeeta Bijlani, Sonu Walia—would look silly playing coy.

Rekha showed why she is cinema's great survivor. Not only did she act in dozens of commercial films, she even side-stepped into the other cinema in Muzaffar Ali's *Umrao Jaan* and Shashi Kapoor's *Utsav*. When block-busters fell in 1988, she came up with a winner: *Khoon Bhari Maang*.

The decade also saw the return of 'Bobby': Dimple Kapadia in all her crowning glory was back in force. But it was Sridevi who was the P.T. Usha of the celluloid track. The only heroine to cross the *Lakshman rekha* of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 12 lakhs, she now commands twice the amount. *Nagina, Mr India* and then *Chandni* earned her the crown of celluloid queen.

The parallel or serious cinema peaked and slid into obscurity. It got an unexpected heady start in 1980 with Govind Nihalani's directorial debut, *Aakrosh*, about political and bureaucratic corruption. *Chakra, Saransh, Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron, Arth, 36 Chowrin-*

Amrish Puri; and (below) Anupam Kher in *Nigahen* and Rekha in *Madam X*

Villainy came of age. The villain became a star. And as heroines picked up weapons, a latter-day Kali in black leather was born.

"In Satyug, it was Ravana; in Kalyug it's me."
AMRISH PURI

"I fit this phase of the cool, relaxed, smiling villain. The villain is supposed to look ugly. Now it's the smile you remember."
ANUPAM KHER

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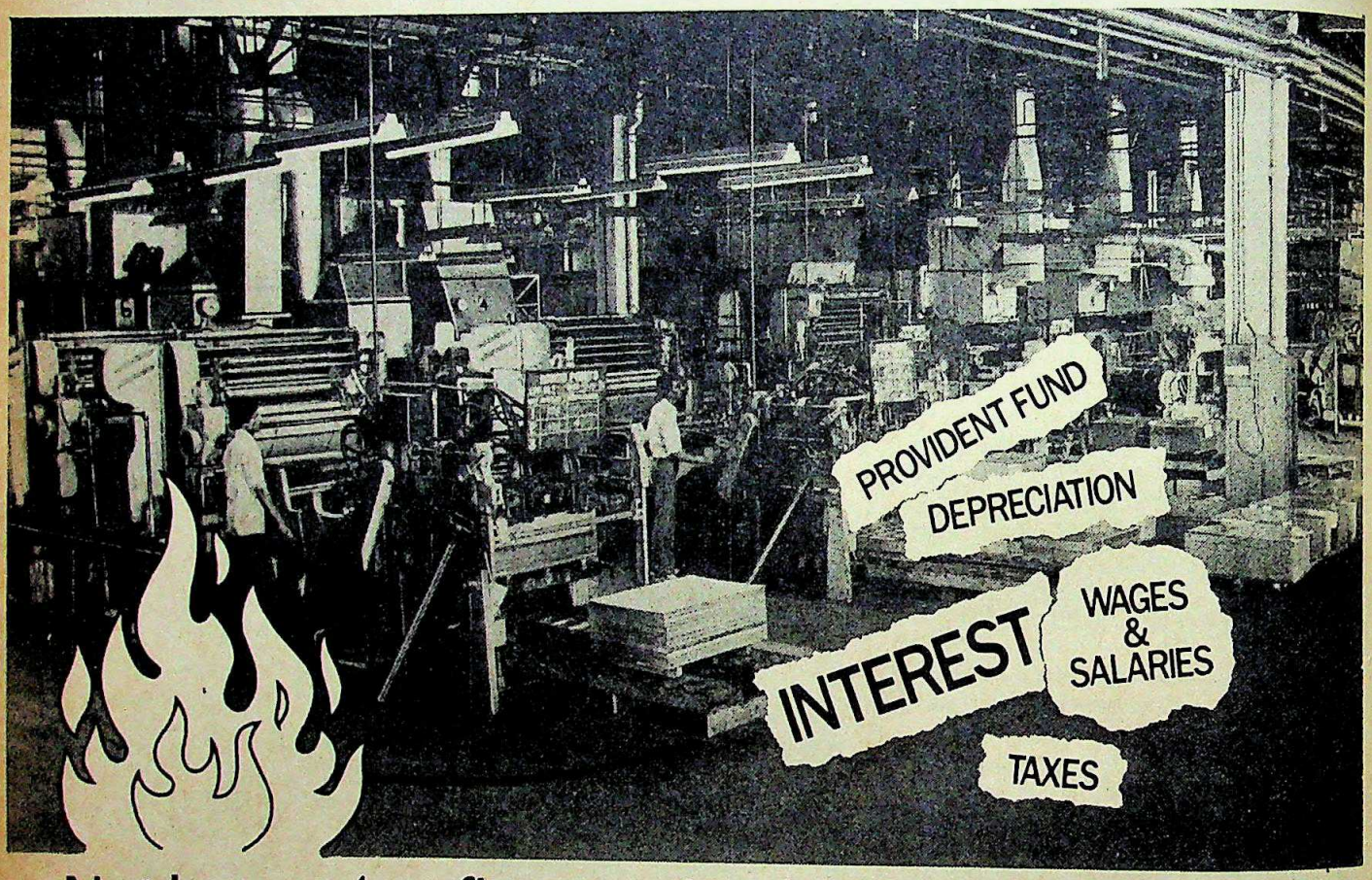

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ghee Lane, Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai, Ardh Satya and *Paar* left an indelible imprint. But this cinema proved to be no long distance runner. Naseeruddin's career chart demonstrates this best. The Atlas of this cinema, he turned cynical towards the decade-end and landed with both feet in commercial cinema. "*Hero Hiralal* is an indicator of what is happening to the so-called new cinema. It was all fizz and enthusiasm in the beginning, but halfway through it forgets where it is going," he says.

The actor of the decade, however, was Kamalahasan. His Bombay forays, *Ek Duje Ke Liye* and *Saagar*, were mere interludes. He surpassed himself with *Nayakan*. The dramatic heights he reached were matched by his comic brilliance in the silent *Pushpak Viman*. And now with *Apoorva Sahodarakal*, there's no stopping him.

Villainy came of age. The villain became a star. In fact, it became good to be bad. Amrish Puri as Mogambo in *Mr India* became a national hero. Ad agencies used Gabbar Singh, immortalised by Amjad Khan in *Sholay*, to sell biscuits and Mogambo's lines to push mosquito cells. The villain even got to act—and not just to use his fists.

Whither the '90s? Romance is a possibility. *Chandni*, Yash Chopra's homage to good old-fashioned romance, is making it to the top. There are no fights, no villains, no politicians: "Nobody even shouts," says Chopra. Yet, the film is such a hit that many mini *Chandnis* are in the pipeline.

Chopra sees the return of melody to Hindi film music as one of the reasons for his success: four platinum discs were sold by the time the film was released. But the diehard romanticist believes that a love story well told will never fail at the box-office. He might be right. *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* at the end of the decade and *Ek Duje Ke Liye, Love Story, Ram Teri Ganga Maili* and *Betaab* certainly had the audience spellbound.

But *Parinda*, in late 1989, points to the direction Indian popular cinema might be heading. Or at least to the new hero. The film unrolls in the entrails of dangerous, underworld Bombay. Yet, he has his hero, Anil Kapoor reluctant to pick up a gun. He has him cry. More surprising still: he has him brutally killed, along with his bride (Madhuri Dixit) in their bridal bed.

The angry young man bows out. At the tail end of the decade, even Amitabh Bachchan, dowdy and unsupermanlike as he could be in *Main Azad Hoon* breaks down and cries. He even kills himself. Here and in *Parinda* the heroes die far from heroic deaths. That may be symbolic. The film industry, at the turn of the decade, is passing through dire straits: the seas are uncharted, and heavily mined. But the ship sails on.

—MADHU JAIN

Anil and Madhuri in *Ram Lakhan*

Despite being a decade of debacles and megaflops, the cameras never stopped whirring, the money sources never dried up.

A scene from *Pratighat*

Naseeruddin Shah with Sonam in *Tridev*

"As long as man can live and has eyes which can see, cinema will live."
G.P. SIPPY
film producer

"The new hero has to be closer to reality, a man who can lead the procession of feelings. A Mr Clean."
RAJESH KHANNA

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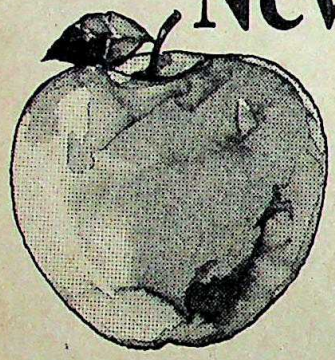
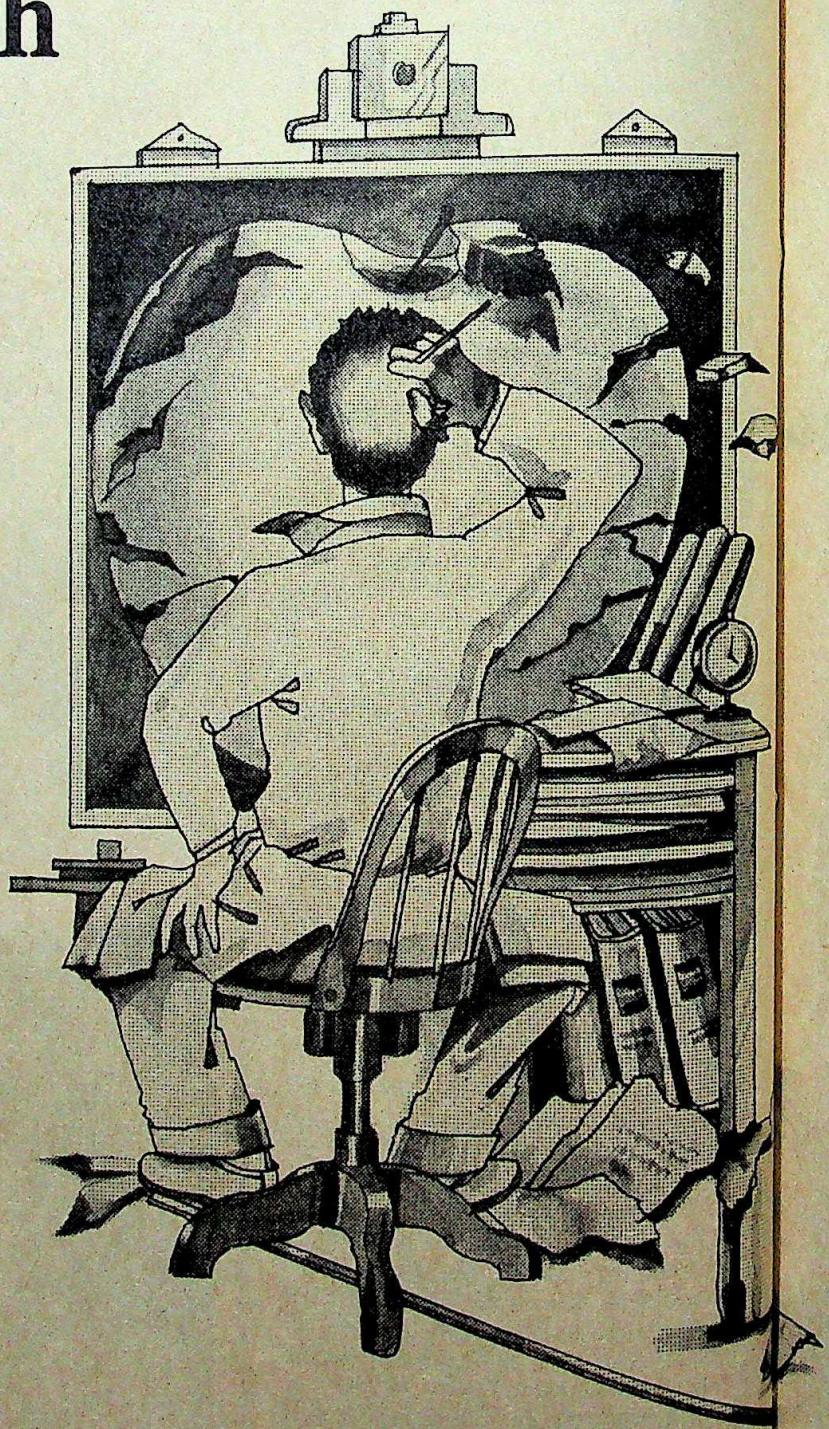
For thirty years we lived with Newton.





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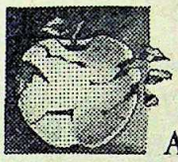
Then we broke his first law.



And, before you decide it's not possible, let's explain just how we did it.

For thirty years, FACOR was India's largest manufacturer and exporter of ferro alloys — a basic raw material for steel. We still are.

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Then, everything changed.

Because of a certain something called charge chrome. In many countries abroad, they use our charge chrome for manufacture of stainless steel.

Our unit is 100% export-oriented.

See how it changed the "state" of the "body" called FACOR.

Like, we are now a Rs. 200 crore plus turnover company. With reserves and surplus at Rs. 29.91 crores on an equity base of Rs. 5.52 crores.

That, for the recently concluded 6-month period (April-Sept 1989), our EPS for a Rs. 10 share is Rs. 21.82. (Non-annualised).

All achieved through an "Internal" force. (Sir Isaac, are you listening?)

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Plans for electronics, pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals.

And another new ambition.

Wasn't there something about Sir Isaac's Second Law?

FACOR

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A typical depositor response:

Why did I choose Sakthi Finance from among the 450 finance companies?

"Because of its spectacular growth. The nett annual deposit accretion of Rs. 24.87 crores for the year ended 31-3-1989 was the highest ever for the industry. This is a clear reflection of the calibre of the Company's management in a highly competitive industry."

The depositor is indeed well informed. For the next best performance, as regards nett annual deposit accretion mentioned above, was only 65% of ours. Sakthi Finance has mobilised deposits exceeding its own set target practically every year. The accompanying table tells it all ! Inspired by past performance, a target of Rs.100 crores has been fixed.

Sakthi Finance was granted term loans of Rs.5 crores by Industrial Development Bank of India and Rs.3 crores by Unit Trust of India, the two leading national Term Lending Institutions.

An incomparable achievement embellished with figures.

(Rupees in Crores)

Year ended 31st March	Target fixed	Fresh deposits collected during the year	Outstanding at the end of the year	Nett Accretion during year
1985	-	1.45	3.41	1.42
1986	10	7.61	10.47	7.06
1987	20	16.95	25.12	14.65
1988	40	25.59	43.19	18.07
1989	70	39.17	68.06	24.87

No wonder shrewd investors are pinning their faith in Sakthi Finance.

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SAKTHI FINANCE LTD

SAKTHI FINANCE LIMITED

GROWTH SECURITY PROFITABILITY

Executive Chairman: S.N.PAI.

Regd. Office: 475, Dr. Nanjappa Road, COIMBATORE - 641 018.

ACCEPTS/ RENEWS DEPOSITS

FIXED DEPOSITS:

Period (Months)	Interest (Per Annum)
25 48 30 54 36 60 42	14%

CASH CERTIFICATES:

Period (Months)	Amount of Deposit	Amount Repayable on maturity Rs.	Annual Yield %
25	Rs 1,000/-	Rs 1,336/-	16.13
30		Rs 1,416/-	16.64
36		Rs 1,518/-	17.27
42		Rs 1,628/-	17.94
48		Rs 1,745/-	18.63
54		Rs 1,871/-	19.35
60		Rs 2,006/	20.12

The deposit more than doubles in five years!

RECURRING DEPOSITS:

Period (Months)	Amount of Deposit (Monthly)	Amount Repayable
25	Rs 50/-	Rs 1,459/-
30		Rs 1,804/-
36		Rs 2,247/-
42		Rs 2,721/-
48		Rs 3,230/-
54		Rs 3,775/-
60		Rs 4,360/

Subject to deduction of tax at source, wherever applicable.

Subject to the terms and conditions attached to the Application Form.

i) Minimum of Rs 1,000/- for Fixed Deposits/Cash Certificates.

ii) **Interest on Fixed Deposits will be paid quarterly at the beginning of each quarter. Optionally interest can also be paid monthly/half-yearly/yearly or at the end of the respective periods on maturity.**

iii) **Post-dated Interest Warrants for the entire period of the Deposit Issued in advance along with the Fixed Deposit Receipts, payable at par at all Branch Offices of Canara Bank in India.**

iv) **All Branch Offices of Canara Bank, The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd., and The City Union Bank Ltd., will accept remittances on our behalf, free of charge to the depositor. Such amounts will earn interest from the date of such remittances.**

v) **At our Main Offices at Coimbatore, Madras, Madurai and Bangalore, Cash Certificates/Fixed Deposit Receipts together with Post-dated Interest Warrants for the entire period of deposit will be issued within minutes of making the payment.**

vi) The Application Forms for Deposit can also be had from all Offices of the Company, as also those of important Brokers throughout the country.

vii) Deposits from Non-Residents of Indian Nationality/Origin will also be accepted on non-repatriation basis

BRIEF PARTICULARS OF THE COMPANY:

a) Name of the Company : **SAKTHI FINANCE LIMITED**

b) Date of Incorporation : 30-3-1955

c) Business carried on by the Company with details of branches:

i) Hire Purchase/Lease Financing of Commercial Vehicles, Equipment, etc.

ii) Leasing of Safe Deposit Lockers.

Branches at Bangalore (Richmond Circle, Jayanagar), Bombay (Nariman Point, Chembur and Santa Cruz), Calicut, Coimbatore (R.S. Puram, Cross Cut Road and Avanashi Road), Cannanore, Ernakulam, Erode, Gobichettipalayam, Karaikudi, Kottayam, Kumbakonam, Madras (T.Nagar, Adyar, Anna Nagar, Ashok Nagar, Mylapore, George Town and Mount Road) Madurai (North Veli St., Anna Nagar), New Delhi, Namakkal, Palghat, Pollachi, Pondicherry, Salem, Sakthi Nagar, Tirunelveli, Trichy, Trichur, Trivandrum, Tuticorin and Vellore.

d) i) Subsidiary of the Company.

Sakthi Financial Services (Cochin) Pvt. Ltd.

ii) Business carried on by the Subsidiary:

To deal in Shares, Securities, etc. as a Member of the Stock Exchange.

e) Brief Particulars of the Management:

The Company is managed by its Executive Chairman, assisted by two Joint Managing Directors, under the supervision and control of the Board.

f) Names, addresses and occupations of Directors:

Name	Address*	Occupation
SRI S.N. PAI Executive Chairman	10, II Cross Road, R.A. Puram Madras-600 028.	Finance Specialist
SRI M. MANICKAM * Vice Chairman	"Sakthi Nilayam" Nachimuthu Gounder Street, Pollachi - 642 001.	Industrialist
SRI M. BALASUBRAMANIAM* Joint Managing Director	5, N.K.P.M. Lay Out, Coimbatore - 641 018.	Business
SRI N.K. PAI * Joint Managing Director	30 Palanisamy Lay Out, Subramaniapuram P.O., Coimbatore - 641 040.	Company Executive
SRI P.C. MATHEW, I.C.S. (Retd.)	10, III Street, Harrington Avenue, Madras - 600 031.	Management Specialist
SRI V.B. DESAI	201, Debonair, 153/B, Savarkar Marg, Bombay - 400 016.	Stock & Share Broker
SRI K.R. RAMAMANI	105, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Madras - 600 004.	Advocate
SRI S.A. MURALI PRASAD	4, Brindavan Street, Madras - 600 004.	Management Consultant
SRI K.N.V. RAMANI	"Surabhi" 153, Kalidas Road, Coimbatore - 641 009	Advocate
SRI A. SHANMUGHASUNDARAM	8, N.K.P.M. Lay Out, Kamaraj Road, Coimbatore - 641 018.	Business

* as from 29-9-1989.

g) & h) Profits & Dividends:

Year ended	Profit before tax	Profit after tax (Rupees in lakhs)	Dividend	Percentage Equity	Percentage Pref.
31-3-1987	181.76	153.76	34.07	22	10
31-3-1988	325.69	274.39	43.98	24	10
31-3-1989	**411.63**	**347.64**	**66.77**	**24**	**10**

i) Summarised Financial Position of the Company:

(Rupees in lakhs)

LIABILITIES	As at 31st March 1989	1988	ASSETS	As at 31st March 1989	1988
Share Capital	**308.83**	308.83	Fixed Assets	**3552.55**	2032.33
Reserves and Surplus	**749.20**	478.32	Investments	**248.74**	83.29
Secured Loans	**806.74**	304.65	Current Assets	**5220.52**	3756.87
Unsecured Loans	**6805.69**	4220.63	Loans and Advances	**730.93**	478.11
Current Liabilities & Provisions	**1087.91**	1044.91	Misc. Expenditure (Share Issue Expenses)	**5.63**	6.74
Total	**9758.37**	6357.34	Total	**9758.37**	6357.34

j) The Company is contingently liable to pay Sales Tax of Rs 23.56 lakhs (previous year Rs 55.53 lakhs) on lease rental which matter is now pending with High Courts.

k) a) The amount which the Company can raise by way of Deposits : Rs 10523.98 lakhs

b) The aggregate of Deposits held as on 31-3-1989 : Rs 6805.69 lakhs

l) The Company has no overdue deposits other than unclaimed Deposits.

m) i) The Company has complied with the applicable provisions of the Directions.

ii) The compliance with the Directions does not imply that repayment of deposits is guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India.

iii) The deposits accepted by the Company are unsecured and rank pari passu with other unsecured liabilities.

The text of this advertisement has been approved by the Board of Directors by a Resolution dated 29th September, 1989.

By Order of the Board
For SAKTHI FINANCE LIMITED,

(S.N. PAI)
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN)

Place: Coimbatore,
Date: 29th September, 1989.

We now pay quarterly interest at the beginning of each quarter on Fixed Deposits.

UIPC-SF-20:89

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An End to Complacency

The havoc continues, but a new awareness sweeps the country

ON the night of December 2, 1984, the unthinkable happened. As Bhopal slept, a poisonous cloud of gas released from the nearby Union Carbide factory mingled with the wintry mist. And as it stealthily drifted over the city, it brought a slow, painful death to over 3,000 people and afflicted 50,000 others with a myriad of diseases. The world woke up to the worst industrial disaster in its history.

Five years later, the pall of grief is yet to lift. But the miasma of Bhopal, in a way, has put an end to complacency. The illusion that modern technology was 'fail-safe' lay shattered. Along with the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the Alaskan oil-spill, the '80s saw the bitter realisation that the earth's fragile environment was no longer safe in the hands of man.

There were other ominous signals too. The mowing down of tropical forests in countries like India and the surging consumption of fossil fuels were leading to the greenhouse effect: a dangerous buildup of carbon dioxide that threatens a catastrophic rise in global temperature. Meanwhile, the earth's protective ozone layer was rapidly being depleted by the unchecked release of man-made chlorofluorocarbons used,

RAGHU RAI

Bhopal was a tragic warning about the pitfalls of modern technology.

"I woke up because my eyes hurt as if someone had flung chillies into it. I ran out blindly. My wife and four daughters were dead when I came back.
Survivor SHEZAD KHAN, 30, *a Bhopal truck driver*

The complaints are changing each day. We can't predict what will happen tomorrow.
R.K. JAIN, *a doctor treating victims*"

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Trust has so many reasons

Godrej. A name that's synonymous with quality and technical expertise. Today, its modern, automated plant with state-of-the-art technology has developed a truly international class refrigerator. Little wonder then, that people insist on Godrej. When they want a name they can trust.

COOLGUARD

Cooler, stronger, cleaner. 100% Polyurethane insulation—putting it on par with world class refrigerators. This **superior insulation** keeps the Godrej cooler for longer periods. The polyurethane adds strength and rigidity, making the refrigerator sturdier. The insulation keeps in the cold, keeps out the insects.

MEGA FORCE

The robust and energy-efficient compressor with the capacity to withstand a wide range of voltage fluctuation. Along with Coolguard, it ensures **faster cooling** and **lower power consumption.**

SPECTRUM

A never-before range of **exclusive colours.** Desert sand. Dusky blue. Electric red. Spring green. Cool blue. Classic white and Misty grey. All in epoxy powder coated finish that is durable, attractive and long-lasting, with unique colour matched table tops.

ULTRASPACE

The Godrej 165 litre refrigerator has the largest vegetable tray. There's better organised shelf space. And its ingeniously designed door panel provides more room for bottles and eggs.

HTA 1643 R

TRUST Godrej®

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LINTAS MSA P 2 2741

Man in his element.

spired by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's exuberant musical genius. Amadeus worsted tery-w itings.

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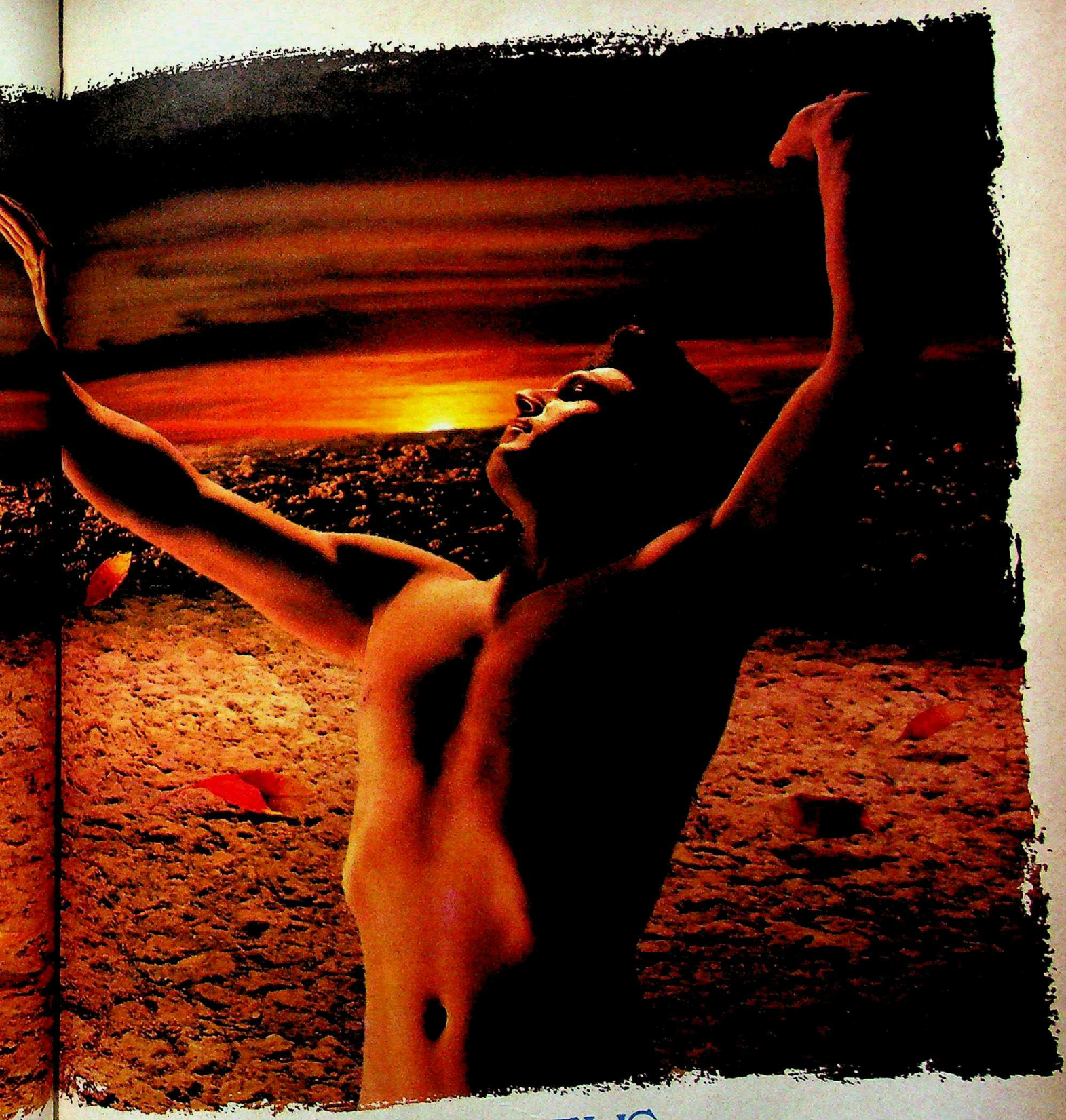

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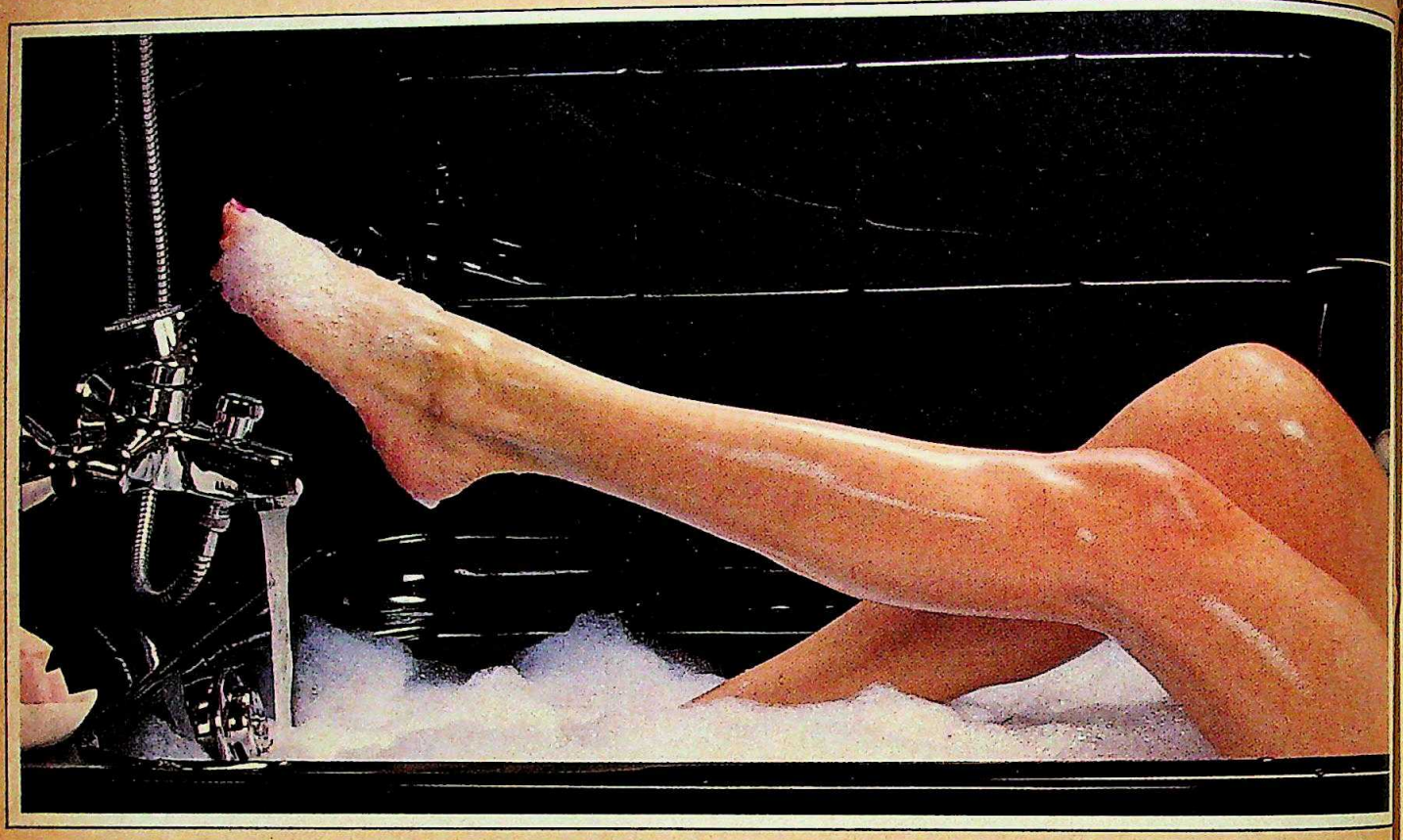

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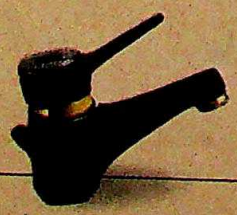

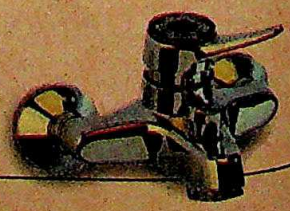

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among other things, as coolants in refrigerators.

In the '80s then it was no more just a question of a forest being saved, a dam construction stopped or a polluting industry shut down. The battle cry became: Save Planet Earth.

The heat of that consciousness transformed India's fledgling environment movement into a cohesive force in the past decade. No more, as Tejbir Singh, editor of *Seminar*, says, "were ecologists regarded as cranks. Protecting the environment became integral to the country's thinking process".

It was a decade when Chipko, a unique movement in the Garhwal Himalayas, shoved aside the urban armchair naturalist. Led by Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna, it was a people's revolt against mindless deforestation. And they did it simply. By hugging trees when the woodmen came to axe them, saying: "If you cut the tree then you will have to kill us too." Chipko triggered a grassroots environmental activism that became the hallmark of the decade.

There were other significant trends too. The Government woke up and launched measures to halt the devastation. More importantly, the '80s saw the debate on environment move from just deforestation to the larger issues of depletion of natural resources and the debilitating effects of air and water pollution. "The tide has begun to turn. But we are still doing a lot of fire-fighting," says Nalni Jayal, a former additional secretary in the Environment Ministry.

YET the ironies remain. The decade began with a major victory for environmentalists in their fight to prevent a dam being built in Silent Valley in the Western Ghats of Kerala. And it is ending with a similar battle over the controversial Rs 40,000-crore Narmada river project. So what then has changed in 10 years?

The difference, say ecologists, can be seen in the composition of the people who make up these movements and the issues being raised. In Silent Valley it was naturalists and scientists who spearheaded the agitation with slogans like "preserve the last ecological treasure house".

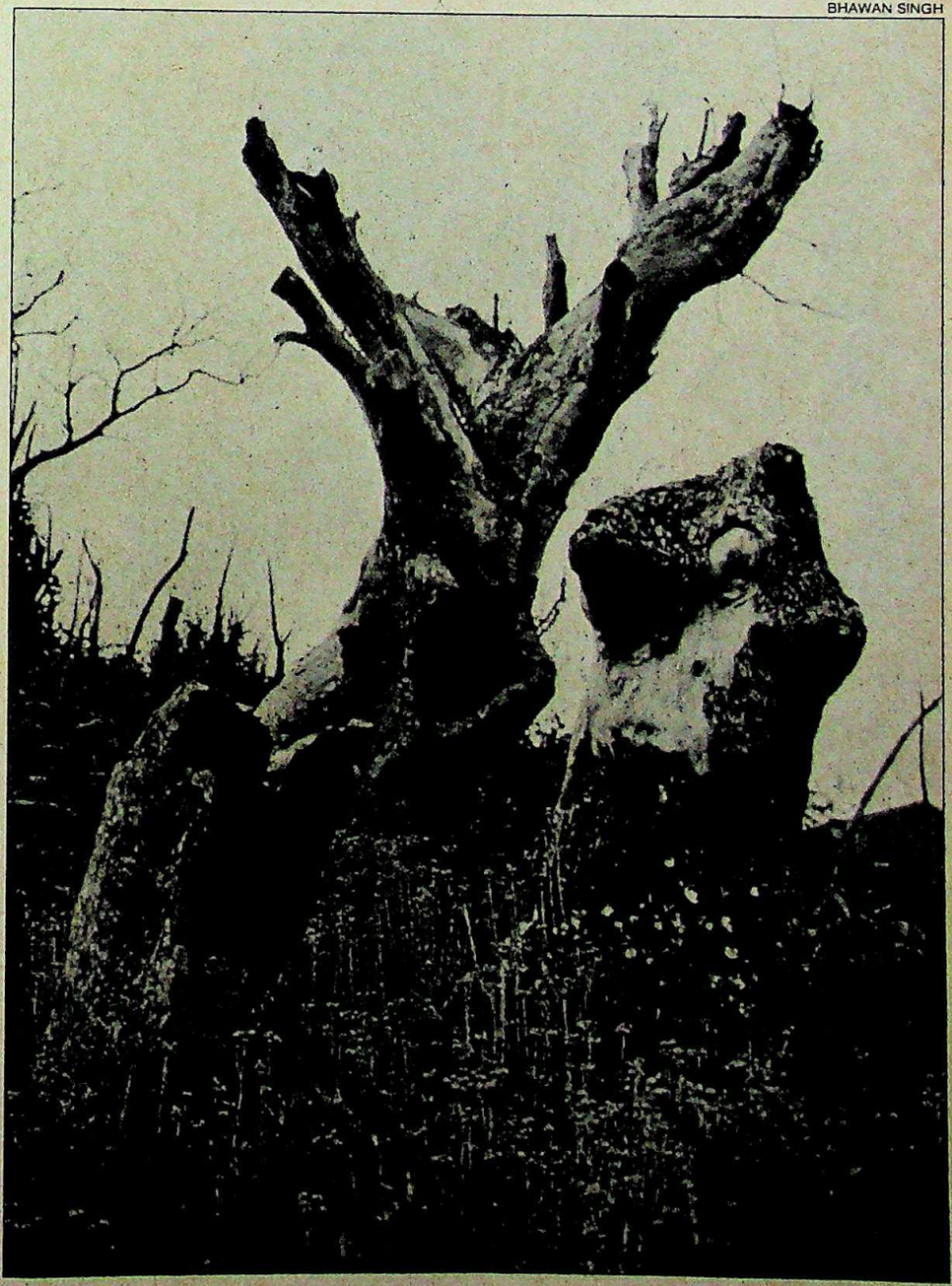
For Narmada, however, the huge gathering at Harsud

The mindless deforestation continued, despite growing protests.

"The nation's entire ecological system is disintegrating. Some of the areas now look like Hiroshima after the blast."
S.C. NAIR
zoologist

"The Government's handling of the environment problem has been one of confusion and ad-hocism."
T.N. KHUSHOO
former environment secretary

BHAWAN SINGH



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town last October was a disparate group that included tribals, social workers, film stars and even Maneka Gandhi, the new minister of state for environment. The issues had grown from saving forests to depriving tribals of their rights and rehabilitating the lakhs of people being displaced. And they raised a basic question: do such large dams contribute to the country's development or to its destruction? As eminent ecologist Madhav Gadgil says: "Issues like Bhopal and Narmada have led to the entire development process being questioned."

HELPING that realisation along was the release of two State of India's Environment reports, the brainchild of Anil Agarwal, a journalist turned researcher. For the first time, citizens were given an assessment of the havoc being wrought. Of forests the size of Haryana being mowed down every year. Of the poisoning of Indian rivers. And the dangerous rise in industrial pollution. That information base pushed ecological activism into what Thomas Mathew, secretary general, World Wide Fund for Nature, calls "a highly professional level. We were able to dispute claims made by the Government with facts."

The Government, meanwhile, did set up an independent Department of Environment in 1980 to tackle the gamut of ecological problems. But, as journalist Darryl D' Monte, author of the eye-opening book *Temples or Tombs?*, points out: "The department spread its net too far and wide and its programmes became diffused." Worse, its major projects to afforest wastelands and clean the Ganga soon ran aground too.

It was clear by the end of the decade that there was no quick-fix solution to environment problems. That voluntary organisations spread across the country had done more to turn the tide than high-profile bureaucratic programmes and laws. And that there was an urgent need for what Gadgil calls "an alternative development strategy that would result in grassroot support for environment".

The message for the '90s is then clear: Development without Destruction. Or else, we would destroy ourselves.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

BHAWAN SINGH

Chipko triggered a grassroots environmental activism.

"It takes me a whole day to collect firewood now. We must preserve trees.
PARVATI DEVI, 65,
resident of Chamouli

The time is ripe for a green front which would act as a pressure group and force political parties to take notice of the millions who suffer from the degradation of the environment.
BABA AMTE, 75,
addressing Narmada agitators at Harsud"

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FROM THE HOUSE OF MYSORE SANDAL SOAP

CLASSIC

Hmm... So exclusive. So exciting!

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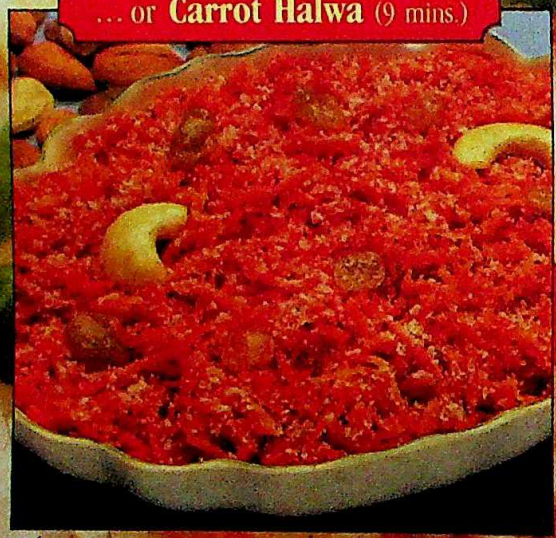
In less time than you will take to read this ad you could have cooked a delicious vegetable pulao...

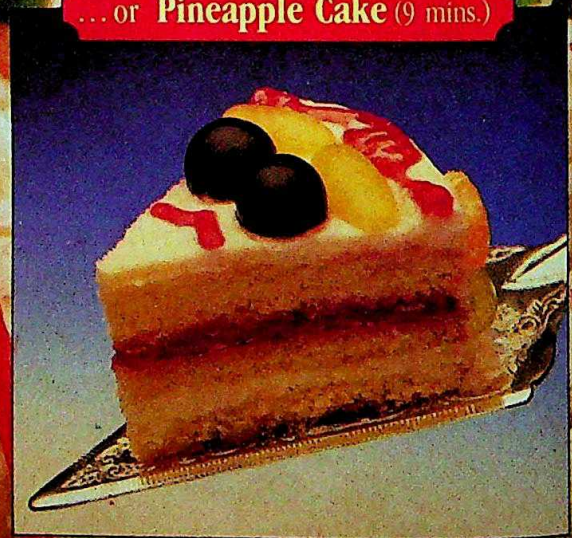
...or **Stuffed Capsicum** (6 mins.)

...or **Chicken Tikka** (9 mins.)

... or **Carrot Halwa** (9 mins.)



...or **Pineapple Cake** (9 mins.)



And many other mouth-watering dishes

● **MICROWIN ELECTRONIX LTD.,** Post Bag 36, Bhopal 462 016.

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Introducing

Microwin Microwave Oven Cooker.

The Microwin Microwave Oven Cooker. A r-r-revolutionary cooking concept now introduced in India. By Microwin Electronix Ltd., pioneers in microwave technology.

Meet Microwin. It's an oven cooker designed to suit today's needs. And meet today's lifestyle. It's exactly what today's woman is looking for.

It's easy, quick and convenient...

Cooking on a Microwin is such a pleasure! And so very simple. Even a child can operate it. All you've got to do is place the food on the turntable, close the oven door, set the timer... and voilà! Your meal is ready.

What's more, it's very convenient to set. The programmable mode switches itself off – once the cooking time is over.

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When a Microwin is plugged in, cooking is done through high-frequency electromagnetic waves, which are similar to radio waves. These microwaves cook by generating heat within the food.

Research proves that food cooked by a microwave is absolutely safe and healthy. That's because microwaves cook the food faster. So most of the nutrients, vitamins and proteins stay preserved. And don't get burnt out. That's why, food cooked by microwaves tastes so delicious, is healthier and looks great.

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Your Microwin can do a lot! Besides reheating, roasting, melting, thawing – your Microwin can cook, grill and bake! So you can dish up all those appetising Indian recipes.

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That's right. Now it's possible to microwave most of those delicious Indian dishes on your Microwin. Our special cookbook of over 101 Indian recipes (the first of its kind anywhere in the world) will help you churn out the most complicated dishes. So with a little bit of imagination you can cook wonders.

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The New Beat

Traditional gave way to pop as India danced to a new drummer

SOME time ago, lyricist Anand Bakshi said with a grimace: "If the audience wants trash, we write trash. How can we write what we like?" His anguish emphasised the decline of Hindi film music in the '80s. What passed for music would scarcely be remembered beyond a month. In the decade of instant gratification, even a month was a long time.

Virtually the entire musical spectrum of the '80s was a similar picture of despair. For melody had died, and the nation had discovered rhythm. Whether it was the mindless beat of western pop or its imitation in Indian languages; whether it was the leitmotif of *Oye oye* or the stomping feet at a disco *dandiya ras*, Indians wanted music to dance to. By the end of the decade, the ghazal was struggling to survive amid a glut of artistes while Hindustani classical music acquired a new lease of life only because ethnic was chic.

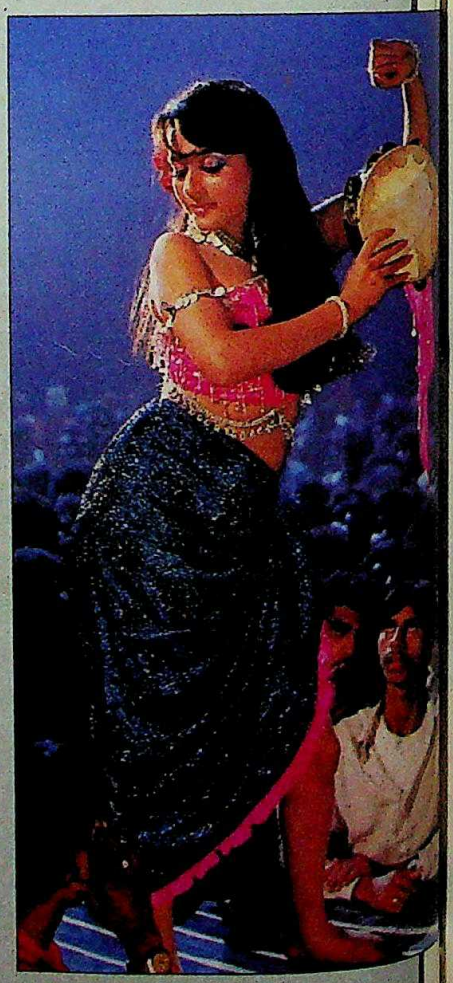
For a nation with a 5,000-year-old musical heritage, it was remarkable that in the last decade it merely reflected trends from abroad. India was echoing Pakistan—the ghazal came through Mehdi Hasan and Ghulam Ali, pop was born with Nazia Hasan, and cult songs were revived by Hasan Jehangir.

The worst hit was Hindi film music. The films made in the decade rendered music secondary. Remarked the late Jaidev: "Multistarrers use music like salt and pepper." Worse, the film industry lost three giants in less than a decade: Mukesh, Mohammad Rafi and Kishore Kumar. Suddenly, the torch passed on to a new generation of playback singers who weren't versatile enough.

Melody died for a third reason: the accessibility of the video drove affluent audiences indoors. What stepped into the theatres was the "*char-anna* audience". Their icons: Rahul Dev Burman and Bappi Lahiri, not Madan Mohan or Roshan. Creativity was at a discount.

The ghazal's appeal was universal. If Jagjit and Chitra Singh were rendering a moving ghazal at a five-star hotel, taxi-drivers were shaking their heads to the seductive inflexions of Penaz Masani's voice. Then there were Anup Jalota and

Indians created music to dance to, and Hindi pop flourished even as melody died.



(Clockwise from top) *Ek do teen*; Alisha; Sharon; the Oye, oye number

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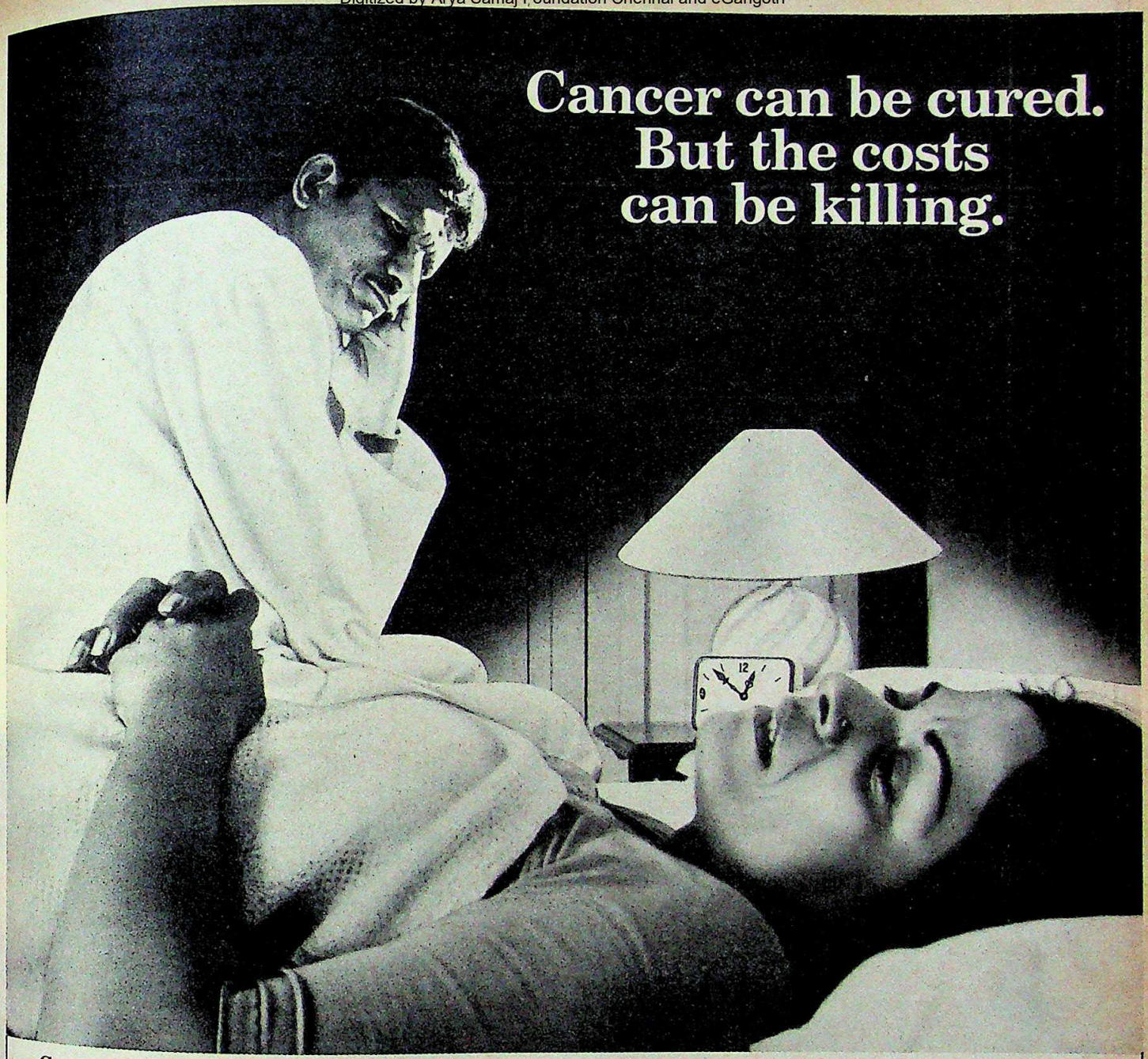

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Pankaj Udhas. In 1983, nearly half of Music India's sale was through ghazals. HMV's Khazana series were a sellout. But the boom subsided soon, weighed under the burden of too many singers, too many cassettes, and too little variation.

Towards the end of the '80s, India's heart was beating to a different tune—Alka Yagnik's *Ek do teen*. The producers cashed in on the trend and soon India had acquired a new punctuation mark: *Oye oye*. Then came Alisha. Alisha's babydoll looks created a sensation overnight. Sharon Prabhakar too made her mark with *Suno suno*.

As the decade ended, the Hindi pop scene was an ocean full of mermaids: Ila Arun, Parvati Khan, Vatsala and Suneeta Rao. Said Prabhakar: "We give the teenagers something a whole lot better than drugs or free sex."

And then, Indian pop discovered English. Remo was the first real star who sang soulful Goan numbers. Rock Machine captured the imagination of the new generation while Nandu Bhende, Ronnie Desai and Gary Lawyer (with *This Can't Wait*) strode the stage with confidence. By 1986, Indian audiences had stopped booing them and began buying their albums.

The English pop stars had another ready outlet: the Bombay musical. It took a long time to realise the appeal of the musical, which is a separate form of theatre in the West. Alyque Padamsee's *Evita and Kabaret* were runaway successes; Pearl Padamsee's *Wiz* delighted the kids; and from Bangalore, *Amadeus* and *Cats* were a reminder that India could produce world class musicals.

It was also a decade of experimentation and fusion: L. Subramanyam and his equally talented brother, L. Shankar (with his double-violin) created unique fusion experiments. Subramanyam's *Conversations* is a landmark, and Shankar's tour of India with John McLaughlin, Larry Coryell and Vikku Vinayakram under Shakti is still remembered.

But in a decade where pop came of age, Indian classical music finally became fashionable: Bhimsen Joshi and Kishori Amonkar drew large audiences and brought an entirely new generation of audiences. Open air concerts drew large crowds and the *Times of India* concerts at exciting locales formed a major high point of the decade.

Yet, refreshingly, the '80s were a decade when Indians made their mark in the demanding traditions of western classical music. The old diffidence was gone. More and more serious western performers came to India with orchestras: Yehudi Menuhin brought Camerata Lysie Gstaad, his school, in 1982, and introduced to India its prodigal son, Jagdish Mistry. Zubin Mehta, the master of the baton, brought the New York Philharmonic in 1984. And finally, Mstislav Rostroprovich played the amazing Stradivarus accompanied by Fali Pavri's delightful piano in 1988. Abroad, Naresh Sohal, Preeti Paintal, Deborah Gonsalves, Patricia Rozario, Preeti Kalyaniwala and Gavin Martin kept the flag flying high.

As the '90s begin, there is an exciting crop of young classical performers who are about to step in centre-stage. Budhaditya Mukherjee in sitar, Arati Ankalikar and Veena Sahasrabuddhe's vocal performances, and U. Sriniwas's mastery of the mandolin point toward a melodious future, even though it will be the relentless beat of pop that will continue to dominate our music. The awesome power of *Oye oye* has at least demonstrated that India can sing again, though to the tune of a changing time.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

The ghazal boom subsided under the burden of too many singers.

(Clockwise from top) Anup Jalota; Jagjit and Chitra; and Pankaj Udhas

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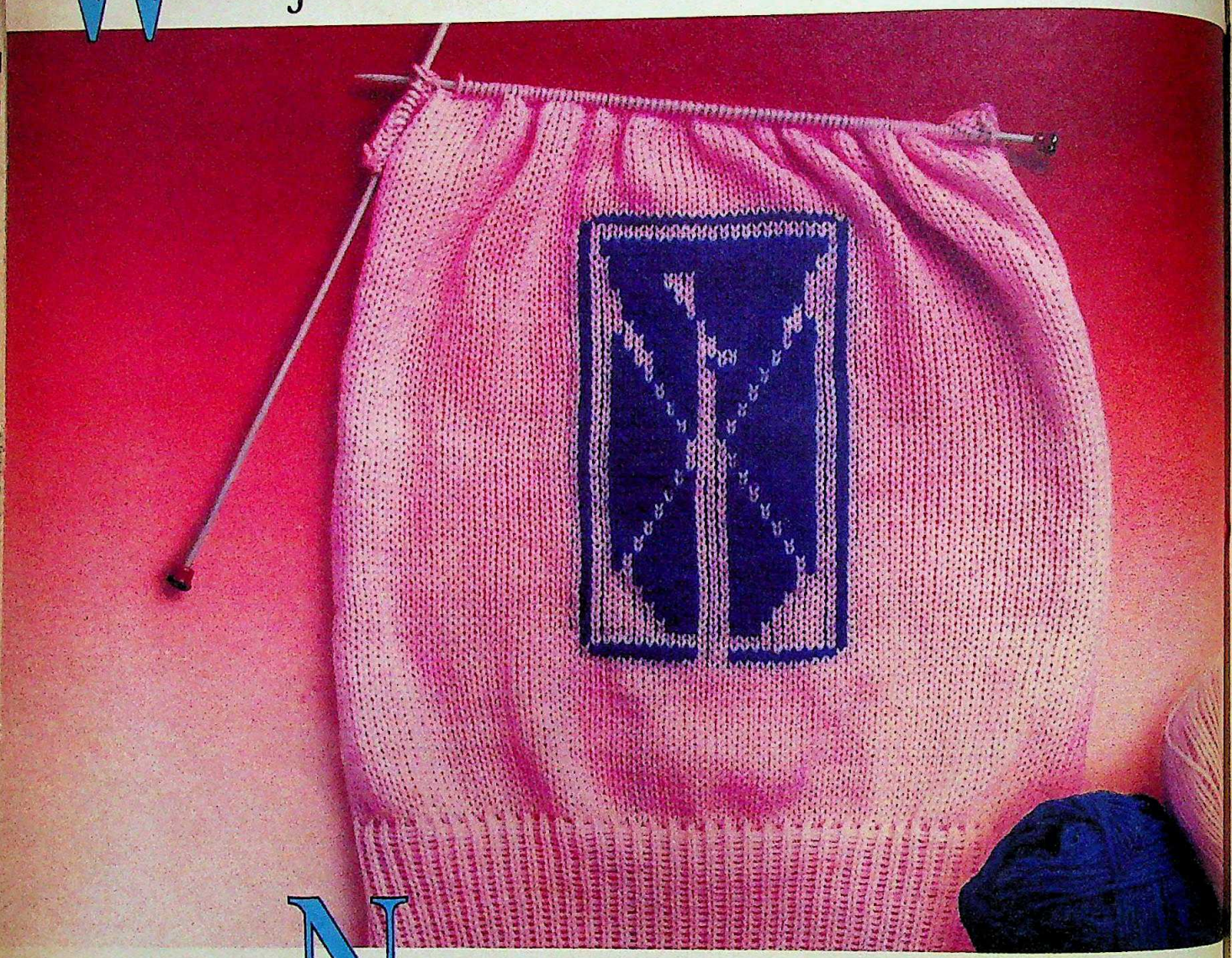

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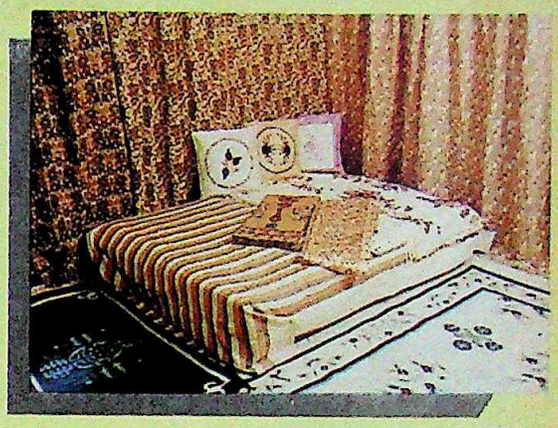
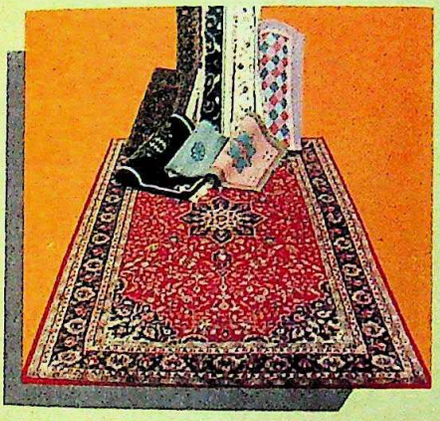

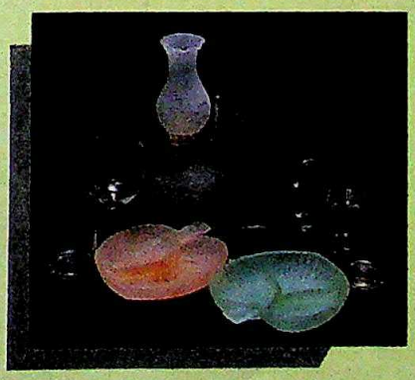

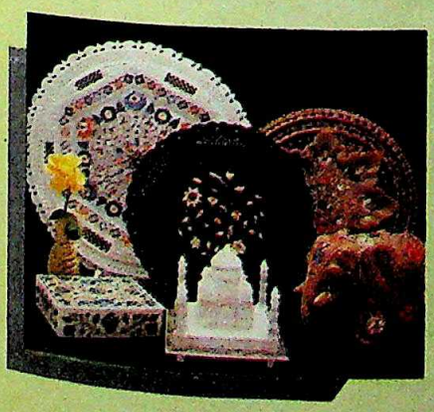

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Making Headlines

Newspapers became aggressive moulders of public opinion

NEWSPAPERS like to believe that what they record becomes a rough draft of history. In a decade that witnessed such historic events as the strife in Punjab and Assam, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the gas disaster of Bhopal, the crisis of Sri Lanka and the formation of the first minority government at the Centre, it was only natural that the press came to play an increasingly important role.

To a great extent, that role was thrust upon it—partly because the Opposition was reduced to insignificance inside Parliament and to squabbling sultanates outside it. Along the way, the press grew increasingly partisan. The end of the decade even saw a handful of journalists metamorphosing successfully into active politicians.

Bofors exemplified the new role. It wasn't Parliament or even the Opposition that kept the issue alive. It was the press—with a series of incisive exposes by the crack *Hindu* combine of Chitra Subramaniam and N. Ram and the *Indian Express*.

The desk-bound editor pontificating on the state of the nation gave way to a new breed of editor—one who'd roll up his sleeves, get his hands dirty, and come up with a great story. The editorial page lost its importance. A private survey showed that only 11 per cent of *The Times of India*'s readers knew it had one. One reader identified it as "the one opposite Mandrake".

The new journalist was different. He—and increasingly, she—was young and curious, willing to do homework and ask tough questions. In fact, this was the decade when the woman journalist truly arrived.

The new aggressive streak inevitably led to a disregard for objectivity. For *The Telegraph*, Rajiv Gandhi could do no wrong; for the *Indian Express*, he could do no right.

The *Express* paid the price. Its adviser, S. Gurumurthy, was arrested a day after the paper carried the text of Zail Singh's famous letter to Rajiv Gandhi. In September 1987, 600 officials swooped down on 12 *Express* offices throughout the country, and 162 different cases were slapped against the group.

The Government exerted pressure in other ways—

With the Opposition reduced to insignificance in Parliament, the press investigated and kept alive issues in a way political parties could not.

(Clockwise from bottom right) Arun Shourie; Ramnath Goenka; N. Ram and Chitra Subramaniam: on the offensive

INDIAN EXPRESS

The documents Govt won't let Hindu print

The story in a nutshell

Bofors and Govt invent a decoy

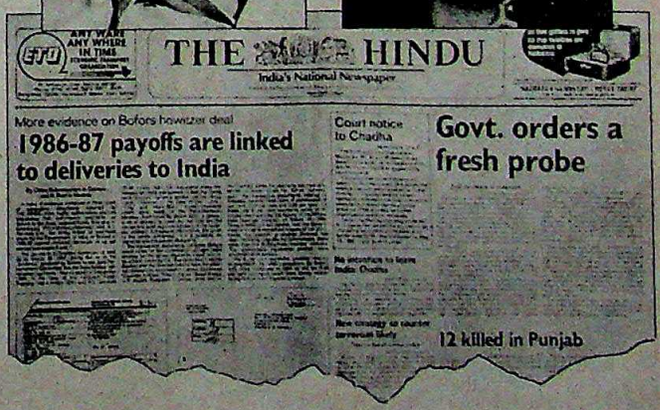
CBI goes after it, lies about real Cos.

The tell-tale documents

Nefarious role of Bhatnagar, Katre, others

N Ram and Chitra Subramaniam's findings

'Winding up' theory finally exploded


THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

More evidence on Bofors howitzer deal

1986-87 payoffs are linked to deliveries to India

Court notice to Chadha

Govt. orders a fresh probe

12 killed in Punjab

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through newsprint prices and state advertising.

The regional press suffered other assaults. In Orissa, Radhanath Rath, 85-year-old editor of the *Samaj*, was mercilessly beaten. In Punjab, the Hind Samachar group lost two editors to extremists' bullets, but carried on undeterred.

But when the crunch came, the press, fractured though it otherwise was, rallied marvellously. As one body, it opposed the Bihar Press Bill and the Union Government's Defamation Bill, forcing the Government to back down in both cases.

The '80s also saw the transformation of the editor into a star. By the end of the decade, there was a "new-look" mania, with every new editor of a publication rejecting the existing framework and bringing in his own staff. Vinod Mehta did it at *The Indian Post*, Dilip Thakore at *Debonair*, and Pritish Nandy at *Evening News of India* and *Filmfare*. Editors also changed jobs often, making the business look like a game of musical chairs.

Journalists began writing columns accompanied by their own pictures, at last media personalities in their own right. A natural consequence was syndication. Khushwant Singh mastered the art of telling little in little space, and ending with a joke sent from somebody in Sonepat.

The glamour attached to the media also tempted forays into the field by big business. The biggest were the Ambanis. They first acquired *Commerce*, a weekly, with plans of transforming it into a high-tech financial daily. Later they acquired *The Sunday Observer*. The Suris bought the Bombay-based *Daily*. The Dalmias acquired *Sunday Mail*. And Vijaypat Singhania launched—and later sold—the *Indian Post*.

However, the Indian press continued to be ethnocentric. Despite earth-shaking events in Europe and China, not many Indian newspapers sent correspondents there.

THE decade saw the emergence of a tough rival: colour television. One consequence was that the print media's share in total advertising budgets slumped from 69 per cent to 57 per cent. To regain advertising, newspapers launched weekend supplements, full of advertisements with an article or two bunged in. To find the news, you had to read between the ads.

The '80s also saw a spate of specialised magazines—on food and cuisine, fashion, music, automobiles, and for teenagers. The biggest boom was in financial journalism.

The English press invaded the regional languages. *India Today* now appears in Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam; *The Economic Times* and *Filmfare* have Hindi editions, *The Times of India* appears in Gujarati, *Stardust* has Gujarati and Hindi editions, and *The Sunday Observer* is launching a Hindi edition.

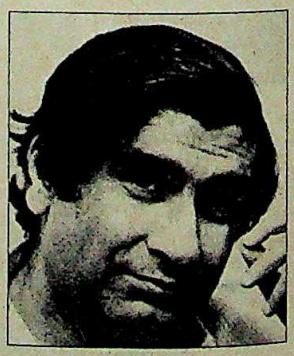
Newspapers went high-tech, going in for computers, phototypesetting equipment and even satellite transmission. At the end of the decade, only a few dinosaurs continued to be turned out on letterpress. But the most exciting medium was video journalism. The film magazines saw its potential first—investing in *Lehren*, *Garware Videotrax* and others. Serious journalism arrived on video through *Newstrack*, now a year old.

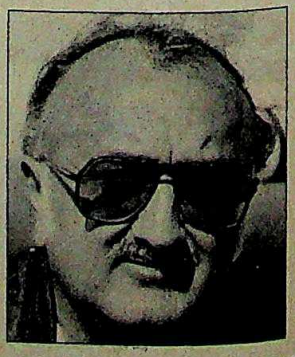
The next decade will probably see a boom in video journalism as well as the unshackling of television. So newspapers will have to work that much harder to enjoy the critical edge they have enjoyed so far. —SALIL TRIPATHI

The new importance acquired by the press turned journalists into media celebrities in their own right and tempted forays into the field by big business.

(Clockwise from below) Journalists protesting against Press Bill; Vinod Mehta; Vijaypat Singhania

BHAWAN SINGH





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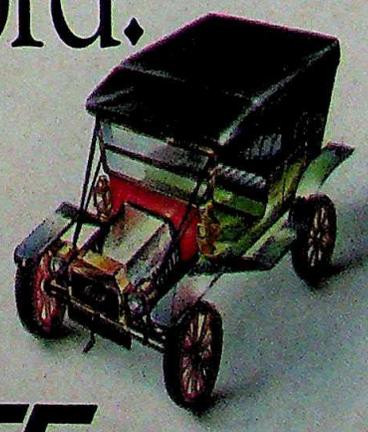

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An Uneven Trajectory

Much to be proud of and plenty to be ashamed about

IT was a decade of space spectaculars. It began with India propelling herself into the exclusive space club with the successful launch of the SLV-3 rocket in 1980. And ended with a blaze as Agni, an intermediate range ballistic missile, catapulted India into the heady league of military giants last May.

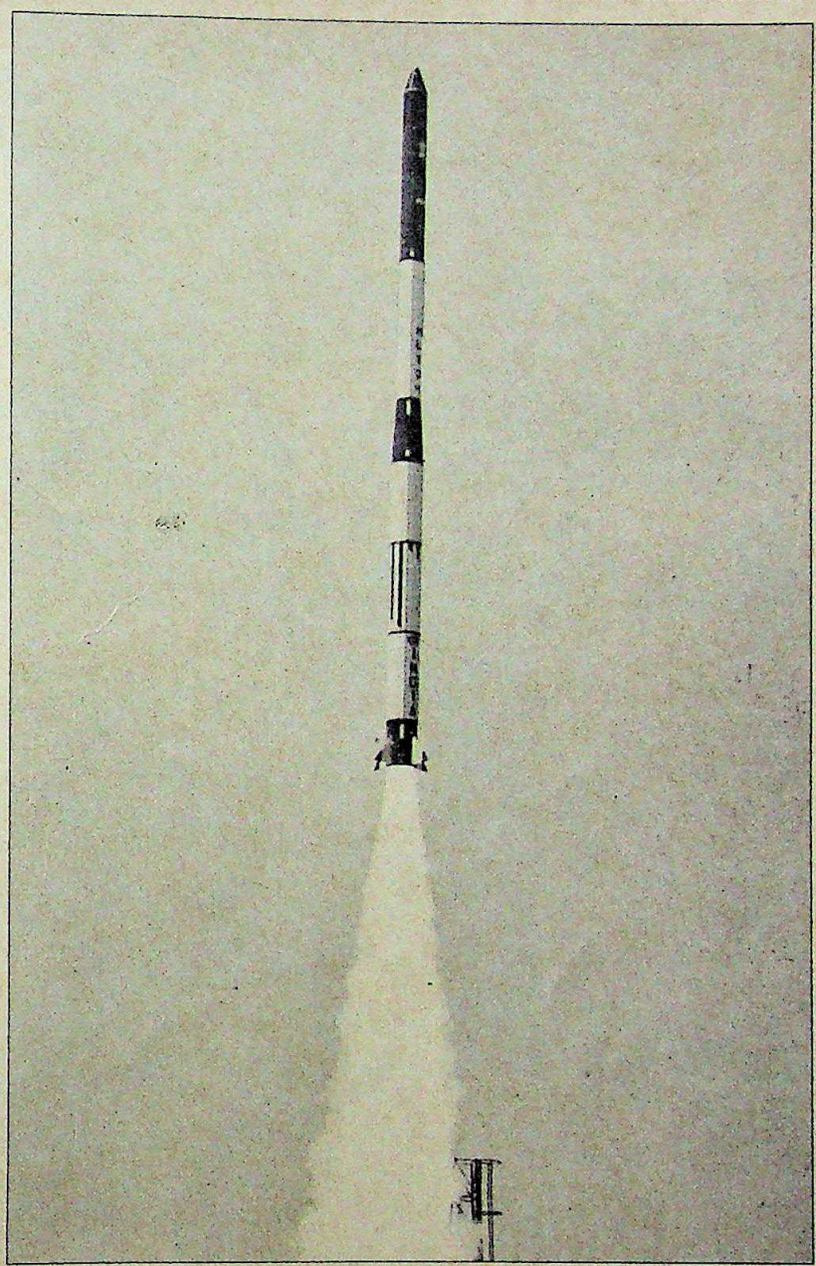
In between, there were other excitements too. Rakesh Sharma became India's first man in space, though the feat was achieved by piggybacking on a Soviet rocket. The commissioning of the giant 92-inch Vaini Bappu telescope at Kavalur gave the country a bigger eye to the universe. Science buffs were enthralled by a total solar eclipse. Astrophysicist Subramaniam Chandrashekar, an expatriate Indian, was awarded the 1983 Nobel Prize. And India established a scientific presence in the icy continent of Antarctica.

As if all this was not enough, computers whirred their way into Indian offices and schools. DNA fingerprinting was used to detect crime. India's first test tube baby was born. And for the first time, a scientist was put in charge of the Ministry of Science and Technology. "It was a decade when we marched ahead and demonstrated our technological capabilities," said Dr V.S. Arunachalam, scientific adviser to the defence minister.

It was a decade too when Indian scientific research came under scathing review. When the country for the first time asked the basic question: how much is it really getting out of the money being pumped into research establishments? And the answer, unfortunately, was: not much. As eminent scientist Dr C.N.R. Rao said: "We had developed only islets of excellence and a sea of mediocrity."

That realisation brought a significant shift in the management of the country's mammoth scientific establishments. For the first time, the concept of accountability was introduced. And institutions were asked to earn at least a third of their upkeep by selling their research. The "mission" approach evolved by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) became the new guideline, not just for scientific establishments but for the country's development.

That shift provided many Indian scientists and engineers the thrust they so



SLV-3 rocket (above); and unsuccessful ASLV: mixed bag

Failures in space and other areas raised serious questions about accountability in research.

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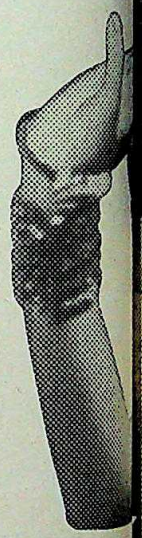

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desperately required. And saw research blossom in many crucial areas. An impetus to electronics, a boost to biotechnology and back to the basics with technology missions for providing drinking water, gaining self-sufficiency in oilseeds, zipping up telecommunications and improving health services for women and children.

Significantly, the '80s saw defence research nudging out space and atomic energy to occupy the top slot in both funds and spread of activity. Its ballistic missile programme roared ahead and brought India much glory. And its ambitious plans to build the light combat aircraft (LCA), a highly-advanced fighter aircraft, did much to reactivate the country's dormant aeronautics institutions. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, serious doubts were being raised about whether they would be able to build the aircraft at all.

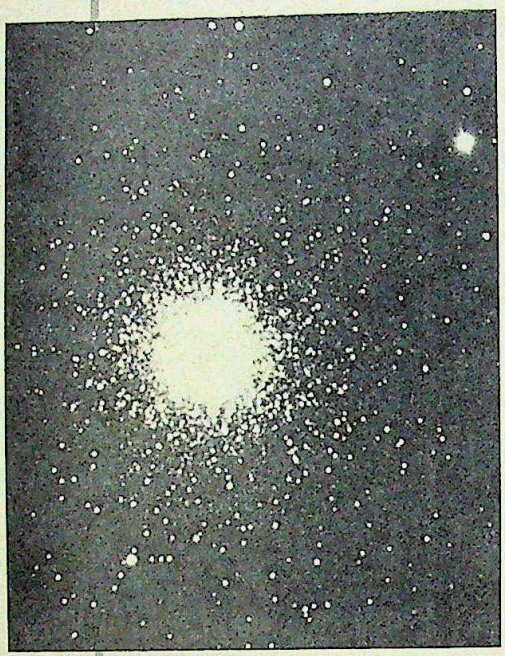
The country's other fancied organisations also met with mixed successes. The ISRO failed to boost its rocket launching capabilities. Two augmented satellite launch vehicles (ASLVs) tumbled ignominiously into the sea soon after lift-off. The organisation made it up by successfully building the IRS, India's state-of-the-art remote sensing satellite. But ran into other problems when it tried to rush India into the communications satellite age. Of the three INSAT satellites it bought from the US, the first died prematurely, the second worked well, but the third is down to half its capacity. And while it successfully saw a majority of the country being hooked to the national television network, the INSAT programme was perilously close to failure by the end of the decade.

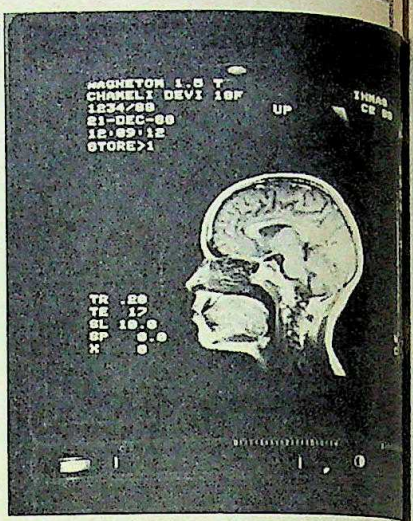
Atomic energy scientists too had a roller-coaster ride. They achieved a landmark by commissioning Dhruva, the country's largest research reactor, in 1985. But ran into plenty of flak when they delayed starting up the nuclear power station at Narora by as much as eight years and ran up twice the original cost.

There were other regrets. Medical research failed to get the necessary impetus it deserved. The Government's electronics policy may have seen computers and television sets invading the market. But it also led to plenty of "screw-driver" technology.

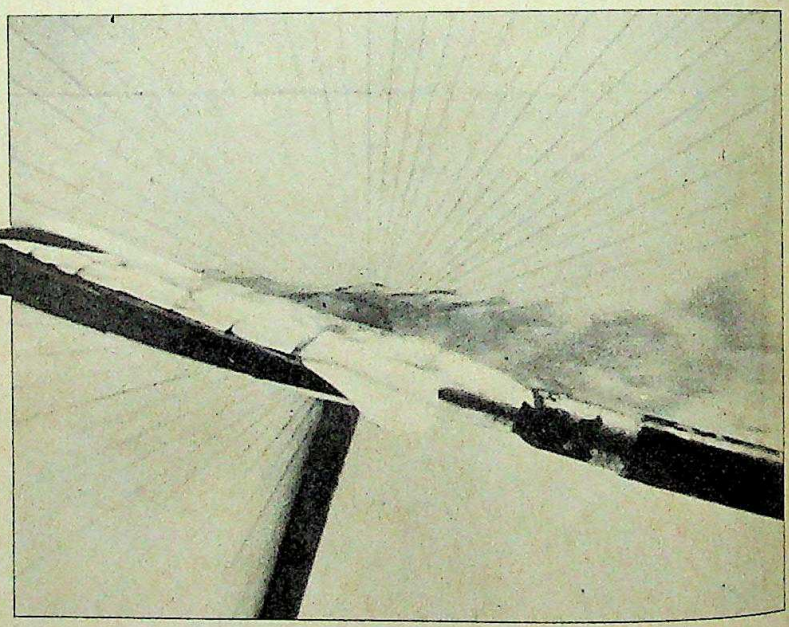
However, the mid-course corrections carried out during the decade may yet see a revolution in Indian science. As eminent molecular biologist Dr P.M. Bhargava said: "The '90s hold out a lot of hope."

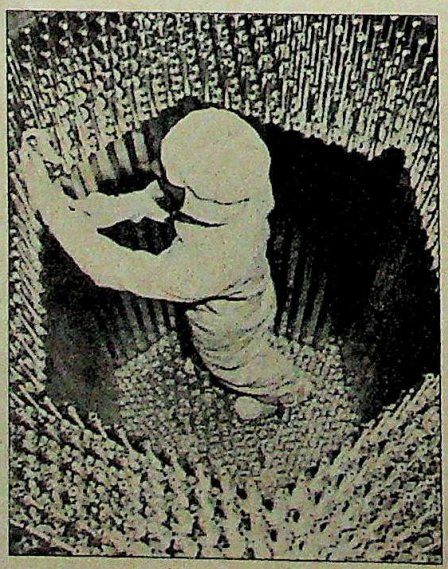
—AMARNATH K. MENON





(Clockwise from left) A star cluster through Kavalur telescope; magnetic resonance image; LCA tunnel test; and core loading at Kalpakkam





Research blossomed in many crucial areas, nevertheless the doubts persisted.

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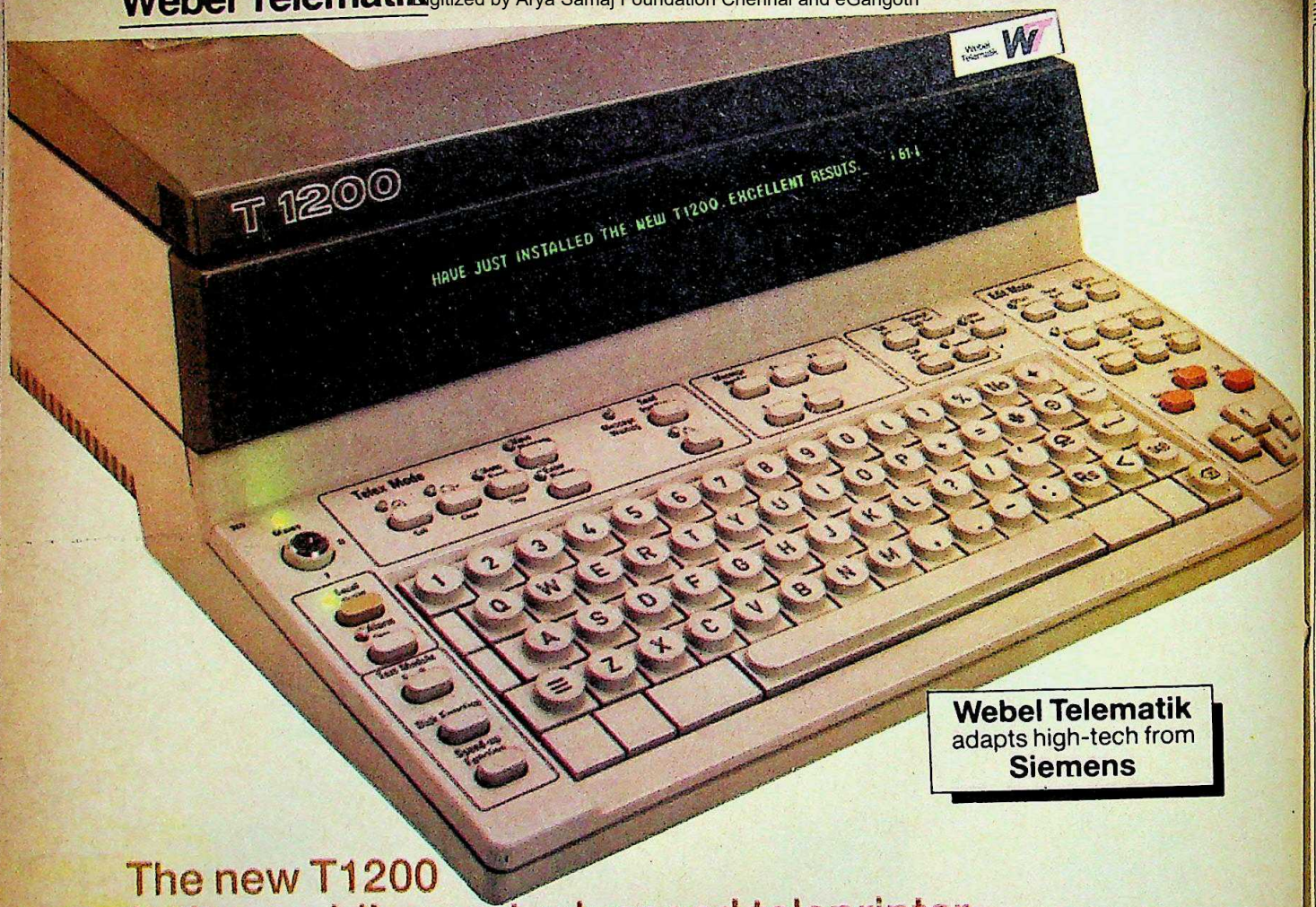

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Rich Strokes

Commerce combines with art to give it a new profile

ONE blow of the hammer and everything changed. Commerce and art finally came together and India was on its way to becoming a painter's paradise, however transitory. Galleries sprouted with the alacrity of fast food shops. For once, it was the gallery-owner in search of the artist and not the other way round. Young painters shed their diffidence. Art brokers surfaced. The age of the impresario was round the corner. Works of contemporary art acquired blue chip investment status. Paintings became conversation pieces. And the yuppie collector moved faster up the social ladder with canvases under his arm.

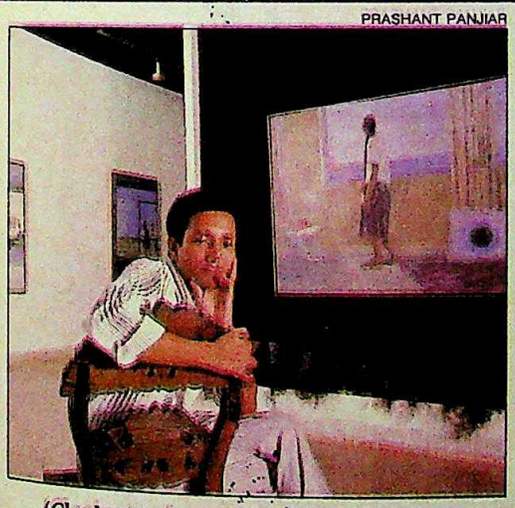
Not only did the Christies' auction in Bombay two years ago add zeroes to the price of a painting, it divided the art market into B.C. and A.C. periods—before Christies and after Christies. M.F. Husain's Mother Teresa painting went for Rs 5 lakh. More important, even fairly unknown painters like Navjot fetched just little under a lakh. Most galleries soon hiked their prices by 25 per cent, and many artists their works by four or five times the amount. The artist joined the ranks of the beautiful people. "We became like movie stars, people would invite us to their homes," says painter Bhupen Khakhar.

Christies was just the first stone in that direction. It was followed by an exhibition organised by a voluntary agency, Child Relief and You (CRY). Chauffeurs lined up at dawn outside Jehangir Gallery to bag the big names on sale for their bosses: 130 of the 180 works were sold before the doors closed.

And then came Sotheby's. These events had only been warm ups. Sotheby's auction in Bombay last March held on board the ship, Jawahar, completed the picture. Husain's Freedom went for an unheard of Rs 10 lakh. Satish Gujral's painting went for as much as Rs 3 lakh. Anjolie Ela Menon's price graph also somersaulted: Rs 2.4 lakh for a canvas. Art became a happening: Sotheby's auctioned works were put up in the Living Gallery on the old walls of Bombay's Victoria Terminus for Timeless Art, organised by the *Times of India*.

Husain, both the man and his work, best personifies the

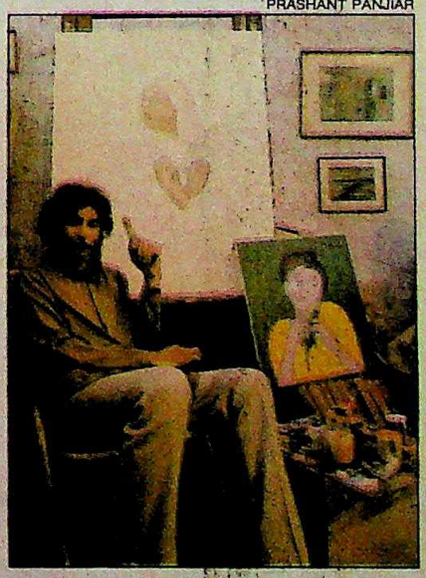
PRASHANT PANJIAR



(Clockwise from above) Atul Dodiya; Manjit Bawa; Arpita Singh; Bhupen Khakhar: solid impressions

The decade saw the emergence of confident new talent, the re-energising of older maestros.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



BHAWAN SINGH

PRASHANT PANJIAR

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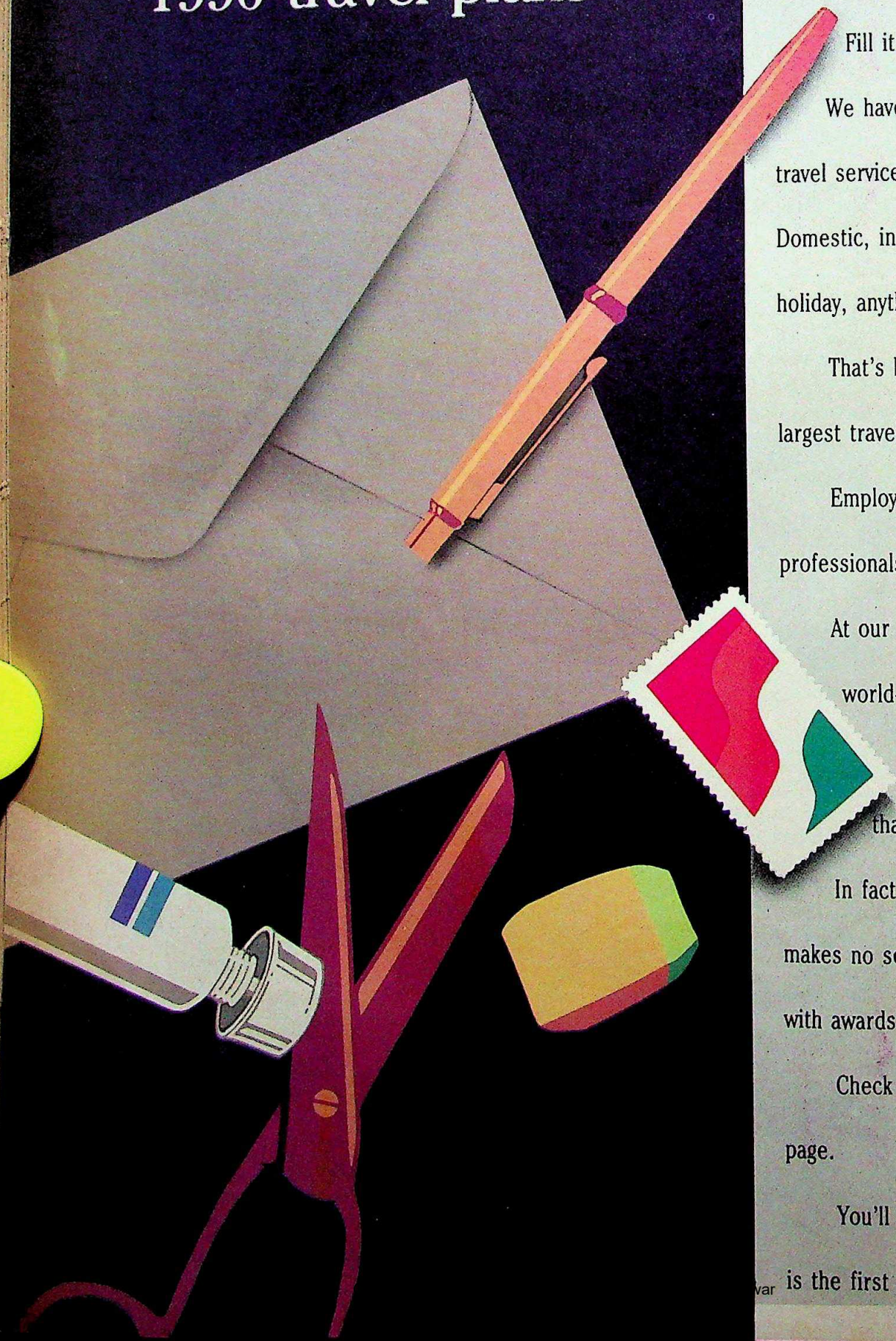
6 essential accessories for your 1990 travel plans



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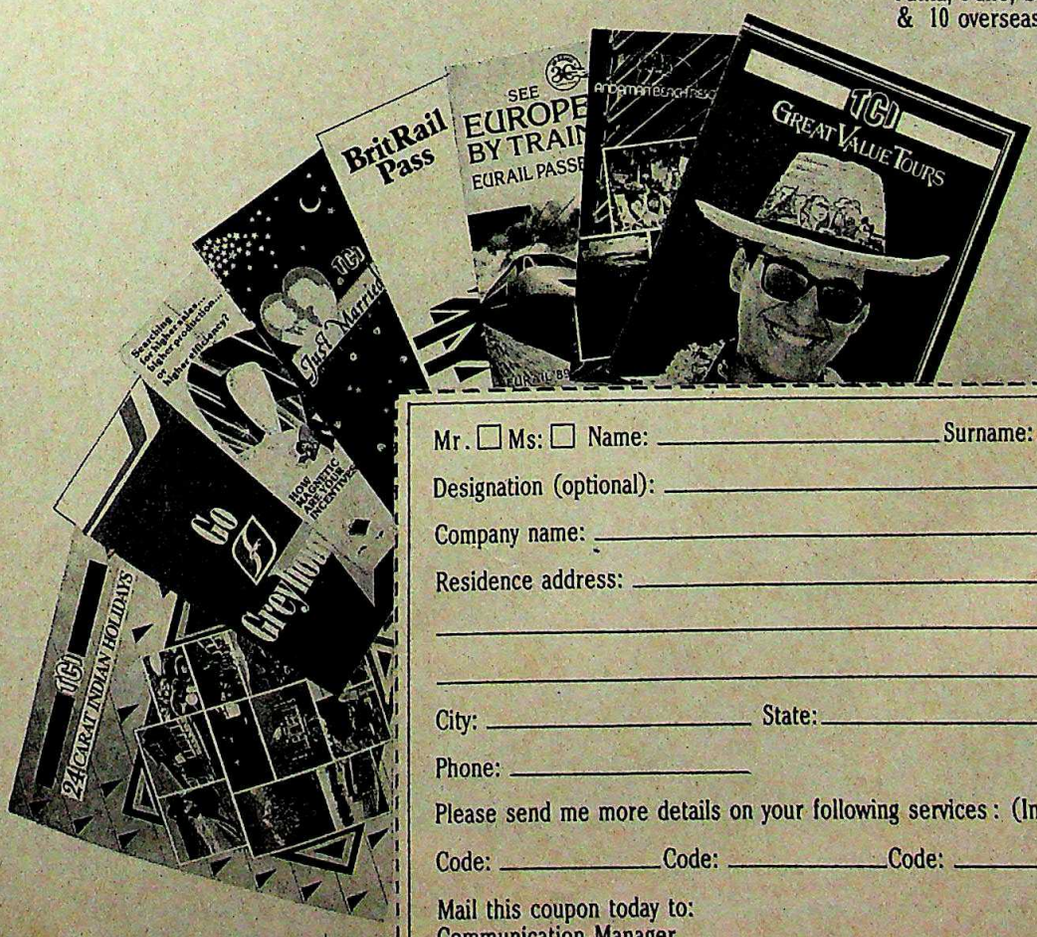

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decade. His works were bought by the inch, or yard. An industrialist even has a whole wall. And in society, you hadn't arrived until a Husain graced your walls, particularly a made-to-order one. Instant art has always been a speciality of the prima donna of the art world. He finishes a canvas faster than you can spell Husain. But this decade saw him become the "Happening Artist": before thousands assembled at the foot of Red Fort for the inauguration of *Apna Utsav*, he drew a huge Ganesh. An event, and there he was with an *oeuvre*: Safdar Hashmi's murder the massacre at Tiananmen Square.

The marriage between art and commerce was consummated in him first. He painted labels for pickle bottles, saris for his daughter's boutique, wedding cards for industrialists, and even started designing jewellery.

Husain's postures found their exaggerated echoes. A Bombay gallery owner put artists and designers together for the exhibition, Art Wear: clothes painted by outstanding artists like Akbar Padamsee and Manjit Bawa.

Commercial galleries in Bombay and Delhi even began to sell vases and pots alongside works of art. Calcutta also saw a gallery boom. The gallery virus spread first and the fastest in Delhi: there are now over 18, as many as six opened last October alone.

The art landscape didn't change overnight. The hard work over long years of the older artists prepared the fertile ground for the young artists, many of them now hold exhibitions straight out of art school. Galleries like Art Heritage in Delhi, Chemould and Pundole in Bombay, and Chitrakoot in Calcutta have midwifed many an artist—some supporting them until their works sold.

This decade has seen the emergence of confident new talent, the re-energising of older maestros; and on the whole a good bouquet of art. Sculpture became interesting and sought after. Puspamala's and Soman's terracottas were vibrant; a group exhibition of sculpture organised by Vivan Sundaram was outstanding.

While stalwarts like Satish Gujral, Ram Kumar, Tyab Mehta, Gaitonde, K.K. Hebbar, K.G. Subramanyam, Somnath Hore, Gulam Sheikh and wife Nilima, Krishen Khanna, Akbar Padamsee, stepped into other mediums or solidified, others made solid impressions. Ganesh Pyne, Bikash Bhattacharjee, Arpita Singh, Paramjit Singh, Shyamal Dutta Ray, Manjit Bawa, Bhupen Khakhar, Jatin Das, Manjit Bawa, Laxman Shresta, Manu Parikh, Jogen Chowdhury, Anjolie Ela Menon and others acquired greater following.

THE younger lot showed promise and kept it: Atul Dodiya, Vijay Shinde, Nalani Malani, B.V. Suresh, Arpana Caur, Jaya Chakravarty, Jaya Ganguly, and Pradeep Maitra, were part of a growing tribe.

What has really changed is the buyer: the catchment area has spread to the middle class, its upper fringes. Professionals, executives, even students, and interestingly enough, women entrepreneurs became the new patrons of art. An increased awareness of art was also brought about by the media.

There was also the return of the foreign buyer, triggered off by the many festivals of India abroad. "Contemporary art was now displayed properly and in a context abroad," says Kekhoo Gandhy, whose Chemould gallery recently celebrated its 25 years. "Collectors started coming to buy contemporary work. The old fogey type of tourist was replaced by the younger people." The yuppie eye was caught by contemporary Indian art.

Inevitably, the art itself changed. Until the '80s, ethnic chic prevailed. But in the last decade, a certain confidence in young painters, and less angst about whether their influences are Indian or western, have given Indian art a decidedly modern look. The art is less abstract, more narrative.

With artists no longer suffering from an identity problem, they are throbbing with life. "We are witnessing a flowering of young talent," says painter Krishen Khanna. "And this is just not in Delhi and Bombay, but all over the coutnry. At least we now have somebody to hand over things to."

That is entirely in keeping. What the '80s witnessed was contemporary Indian painting finally standing on its own feet.

—MADHU JAIN

The Sotheby's auction: business of art

Works of art became blue chip investments.

"A flowering of young talent countrywide is on."
KRISHEN KHANNA

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N ON SALE

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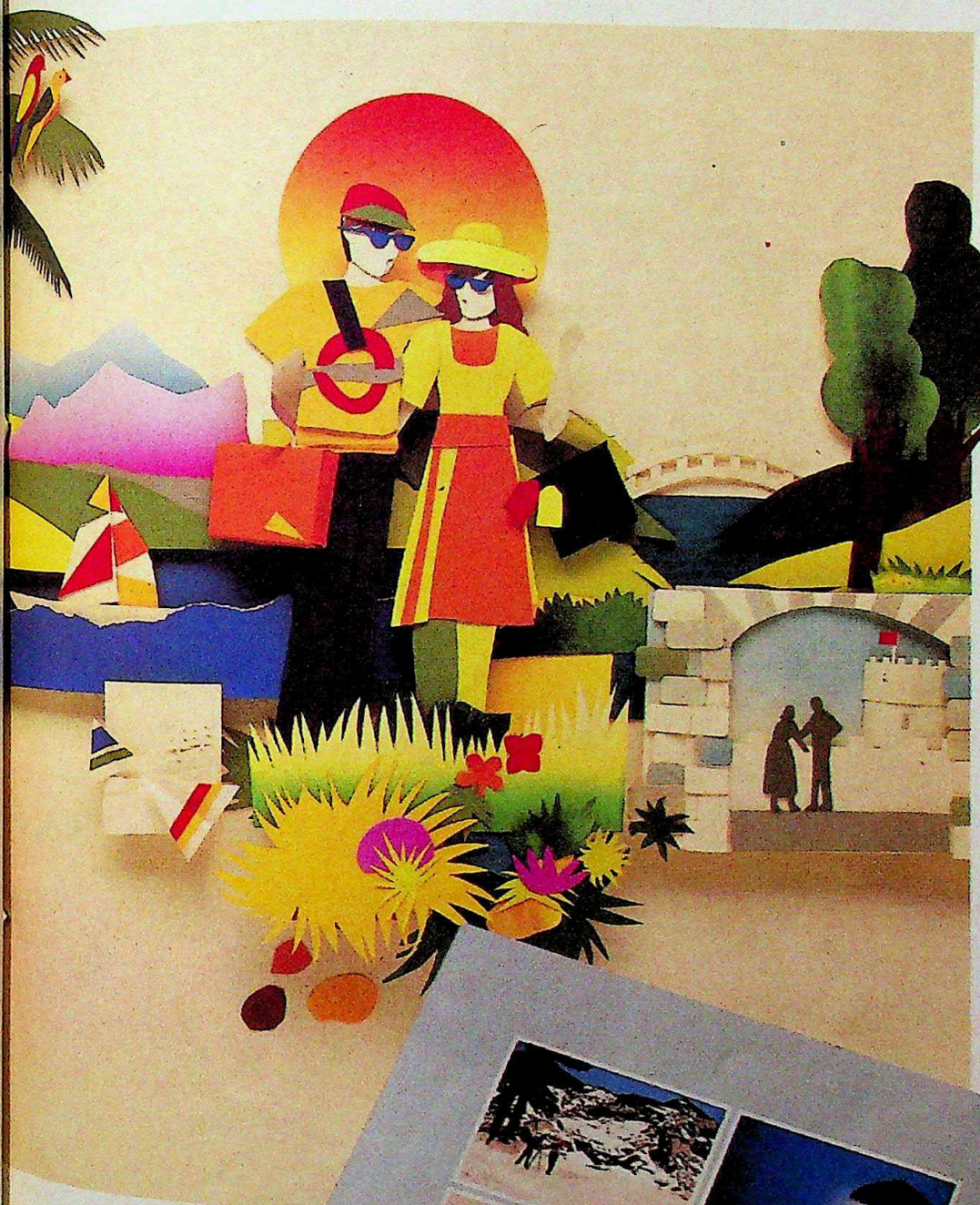

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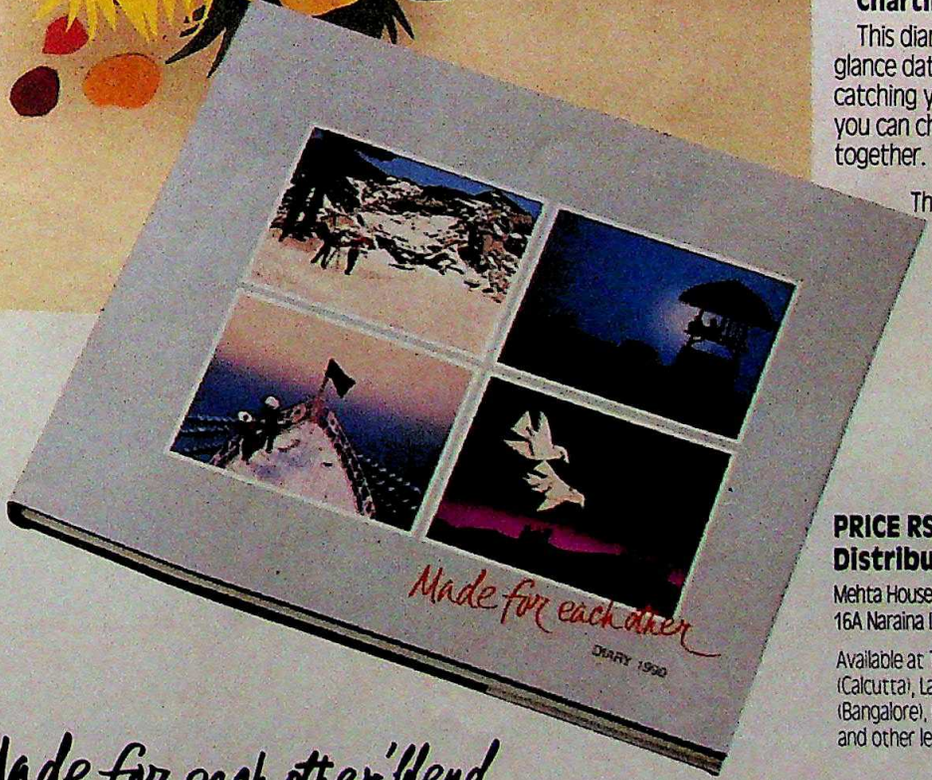

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Designing the Eth

NAMAS BH

BEFORE the '80s could learn to pronounce boutique and forget beatnik, swank little retail outlets had begun to mushroom countrywide, flamboyantly selling the 'look'. And the look for the decade began at home.

The leit-motif of fashion in the '80s was indisputably ethnic, even if the filigree consisted of styles western. Suddenly, Indians discovered the fashion potential of their myriad apparel, crafts and fabrics. This combined with a western concept, that of the up-market clothes designer, to change the way people turned out.

The real action in the fashion world took place in the metropolises, where the rich and the mighty vied with each other over the cut and colour of salwar kameezes, the style and substance of *payals* and *parandis*. They were spurred on by apna utsavs, handicraft m and trade fairs. Many variations of the sal the kurta and even the dupatta, were styl worn. Churidars beat a hasty retreat in the '80s, but by the decade-end were showing of a revival. The traditional *lehnga* too atta the status of chic. Synthetics and polye rapidly became the untouchables.

Ritzy designers set up shop, instantly creating a demand among the growing consumer class.

Even the seemingly prosaic saree un went a radical transformation. Zandra Rh came up with outlandish creations. The ionable baulked at wearing Rhodes, but bought and draped *tangails*, *chan* *kanjivarams*, *jamdanis*, *ikats*, *rajkots*, *Or* *bumkai*, southern cottons et al, as if they running out of stock. Blouses revealed mor more of the female back while sleeves tra

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Ethnic Revolution

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

BEN INGHAM

(Clockwise from opposite page) a designer boutique; the ethnic *ghagri choli;* western style outfit with Zardozi work; and a *lehnga* modification

o the elbow, and then carried on further.

The colours that gained vogue were also of he earthy, Indian variety—magenta, orange, reen, royal blue, turquoise, bright yellow, rust, urple and black. Pastel shades, so fashionable n the late '70s, faded out. The combinations ent wild—magenta with royal blue, orange ith pista green and turquoise with sunflower ellow. Mirrorwork yokes, in a riot of colours for urtas, were the rage throughout the '80s.

The decade witnessed the appearance of a ew breed. Ritzy designers—sporting couture egrees from foreign ecoles—set up shop, and stantly created a demand among the growing nsumer class. Boutiques and labels sprouted. petus was given to the designer scene as obal fashion giants like Yves St. Laurent held

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shows in India. It became clear that fashion had achieved professional status when the National Institute of Fashion Technology was set up in New Delhi in 1986.

The designer invasion did not spare men either. The 'cool' look of the '70s—long sideburns, bellbottom trousers, tight shirts, broad belts—gave way to a more sedate look. Pleated trousers, small-collar shirts, slim belts, and then finally baggies took over. A ready-to-wear industry boomed, topping Rs 2,000 crore in 1988, and the traditonal tailor began to inch towards extinction. The one sartorial monstrosity that got its come-uppance was the safari suit. In came ethnic outfits, such as the Nehru jacket, *bandgala* coat, *sherwani*, and of course, spearheaded by the likes of Rajiv Gandhi

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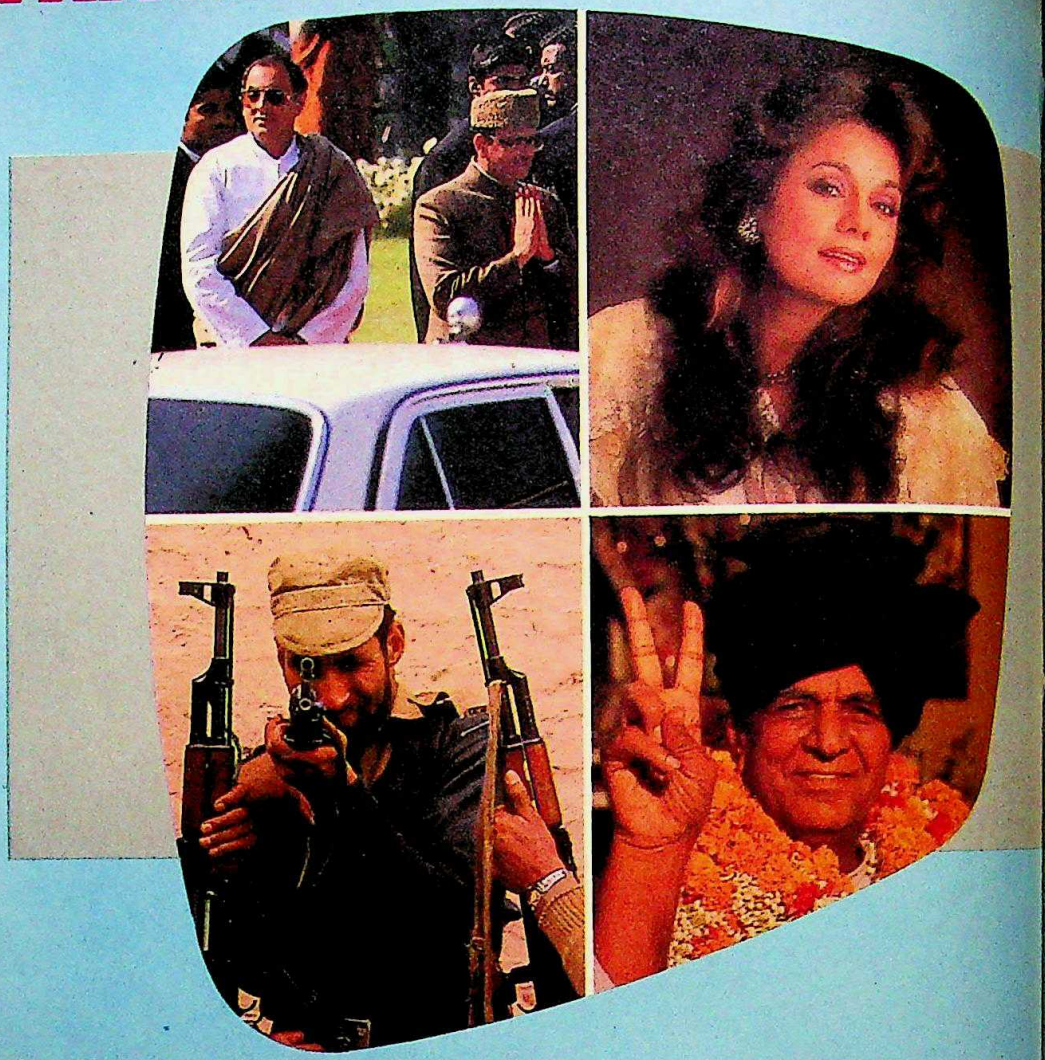

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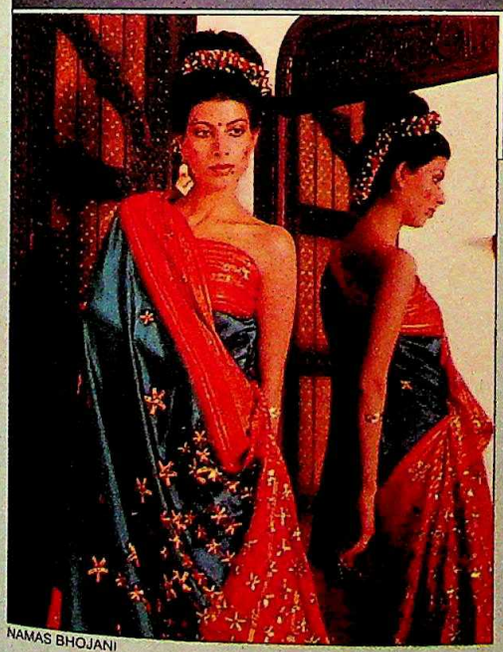
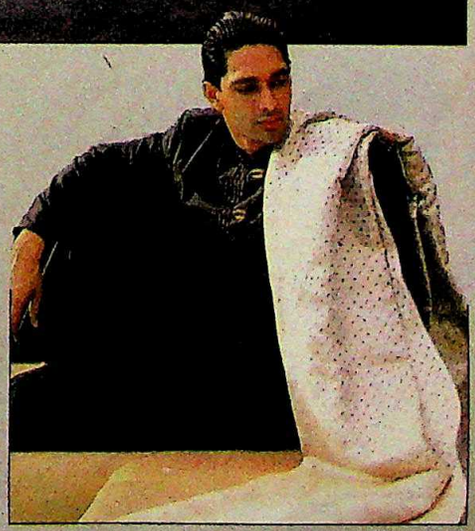


NAMAS BHOJANI

(Clockwise from left) a Zandra Rhodes variation of the saree; an Intershoppe interior; and the carefully draped shawl for the careless effect



BEN INGHAM

and Amitabh Bachchan, the expensive shawl carefully draped for the careless effect.

But ethnic was not all. Denim proved the great survivor. Denim skirts, very tight, knee length, with a seductive slit at the back, stormed the campuses. Jeans came of age in India, becoming a hundred-crore business. Blue, faded, stonewash, they were labelled and unabashedly sexy. Girls lost weight to fit into tight jeans, and pot-bellied men persisted manfully, wearing jeans that looked like tents. Intershoppe helped pioneer all this, and proved a teenager's paradise. Both the collegiate and the yuppie combined this with expensive keds and trendy sweat-shirts to make for a sporty look.

Even the seemingly prosaic saree transformed, with attempts at outlandish variations.

There were both a certain class and a cultivated abandon about the way the young dressed. Average wardrobes contained some 'designer' clothes for formal wear, various styles of salwar kameezes—*Bhopalis, Angrakhas, Anarkalis, Abhas*—some *lehngas*, lots of colourful dupattas, a few pairs of jeans, a large number of loose shirts and T-shirts, some cotton baggies, several skirts, some with mirrorwork, and a few sarees, of the finest ethnic kind.

It was the young, then, who best symbolised the fashion of the '80s: appropriating and aping the western vogues even as they flaunted a newly discovered ethnic chic.

—SHARMILA CHANDRA

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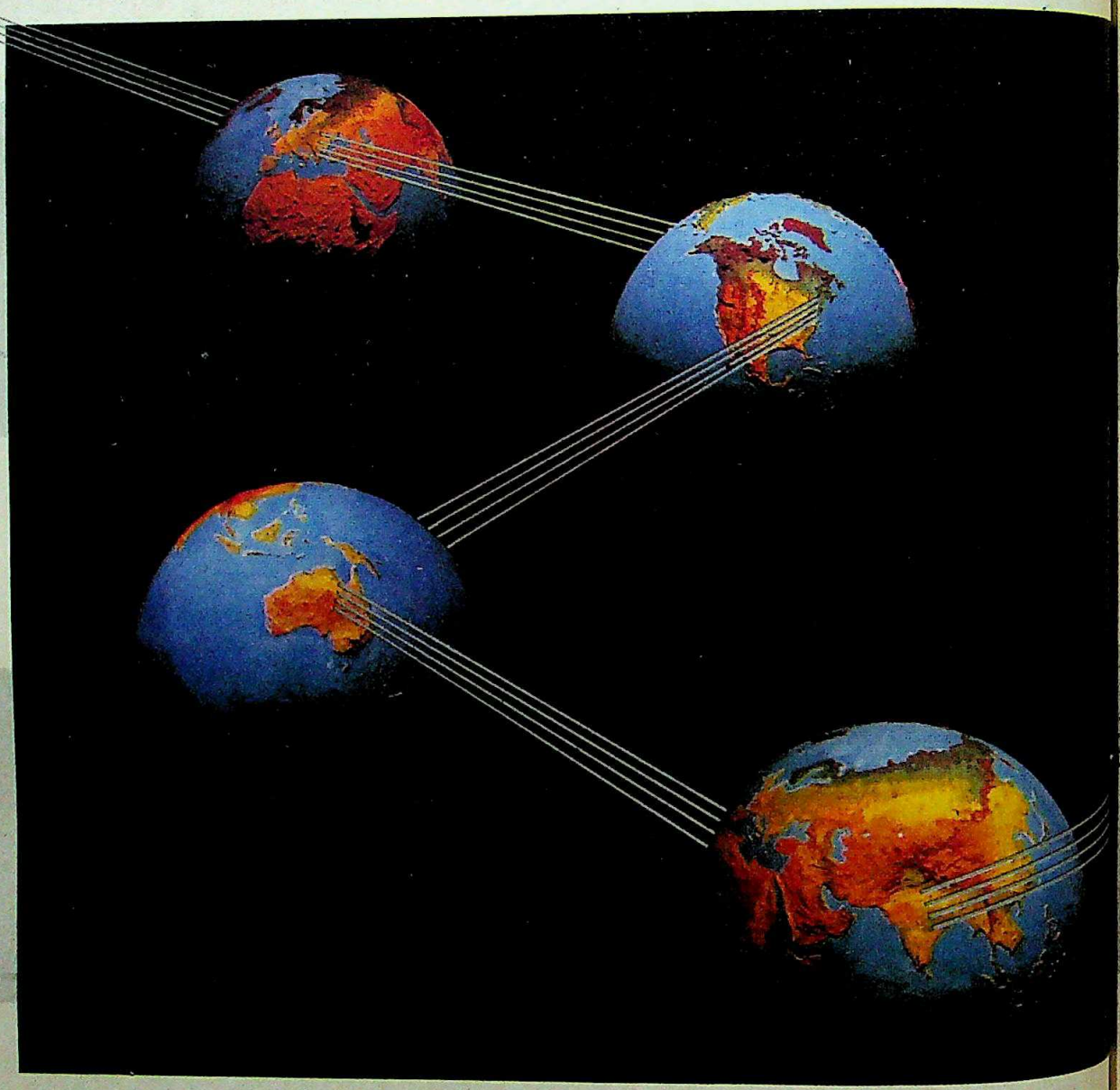
Global Connections



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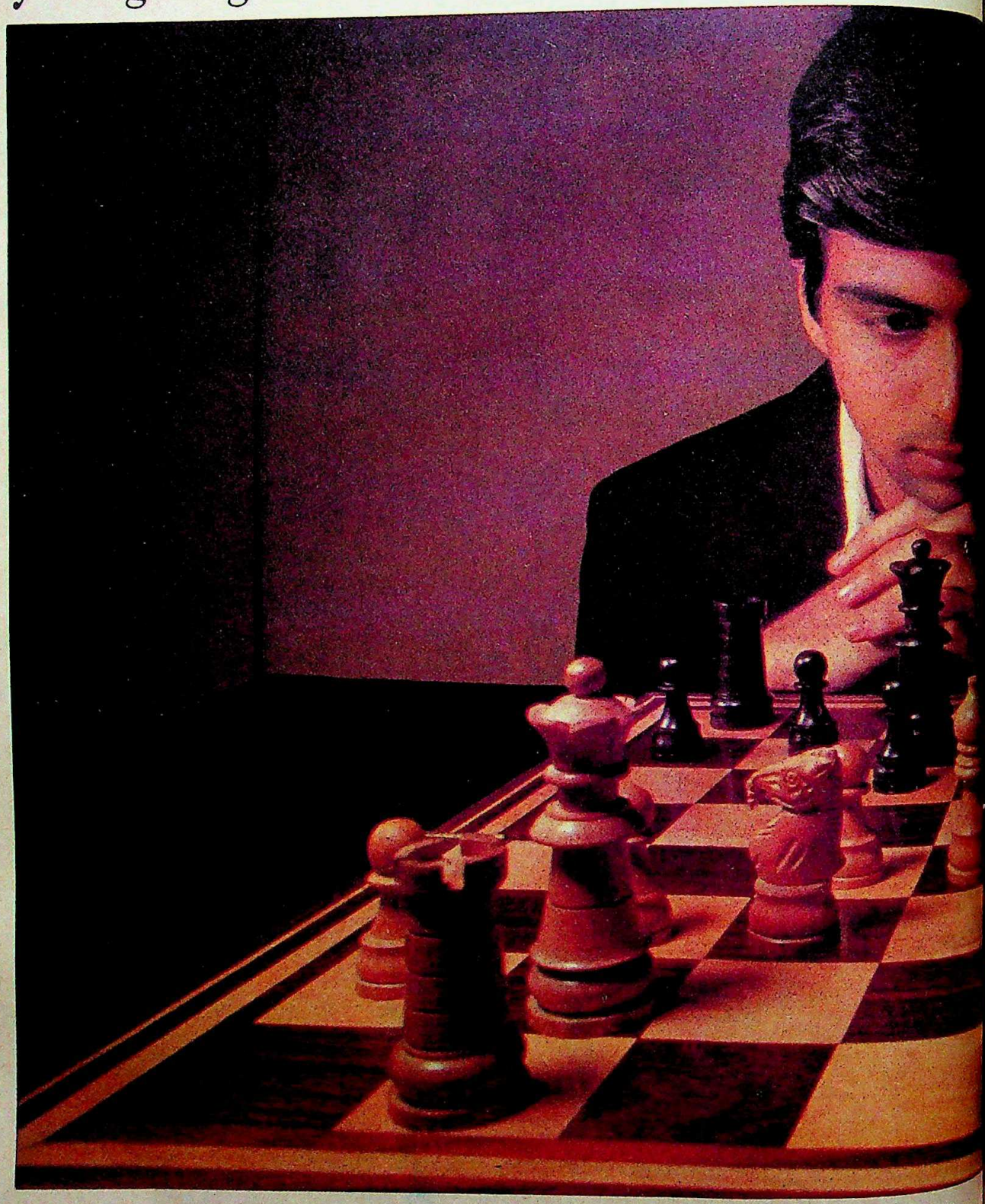
You don't have to be the world's youngest grandmaster to be a Raymond's ma



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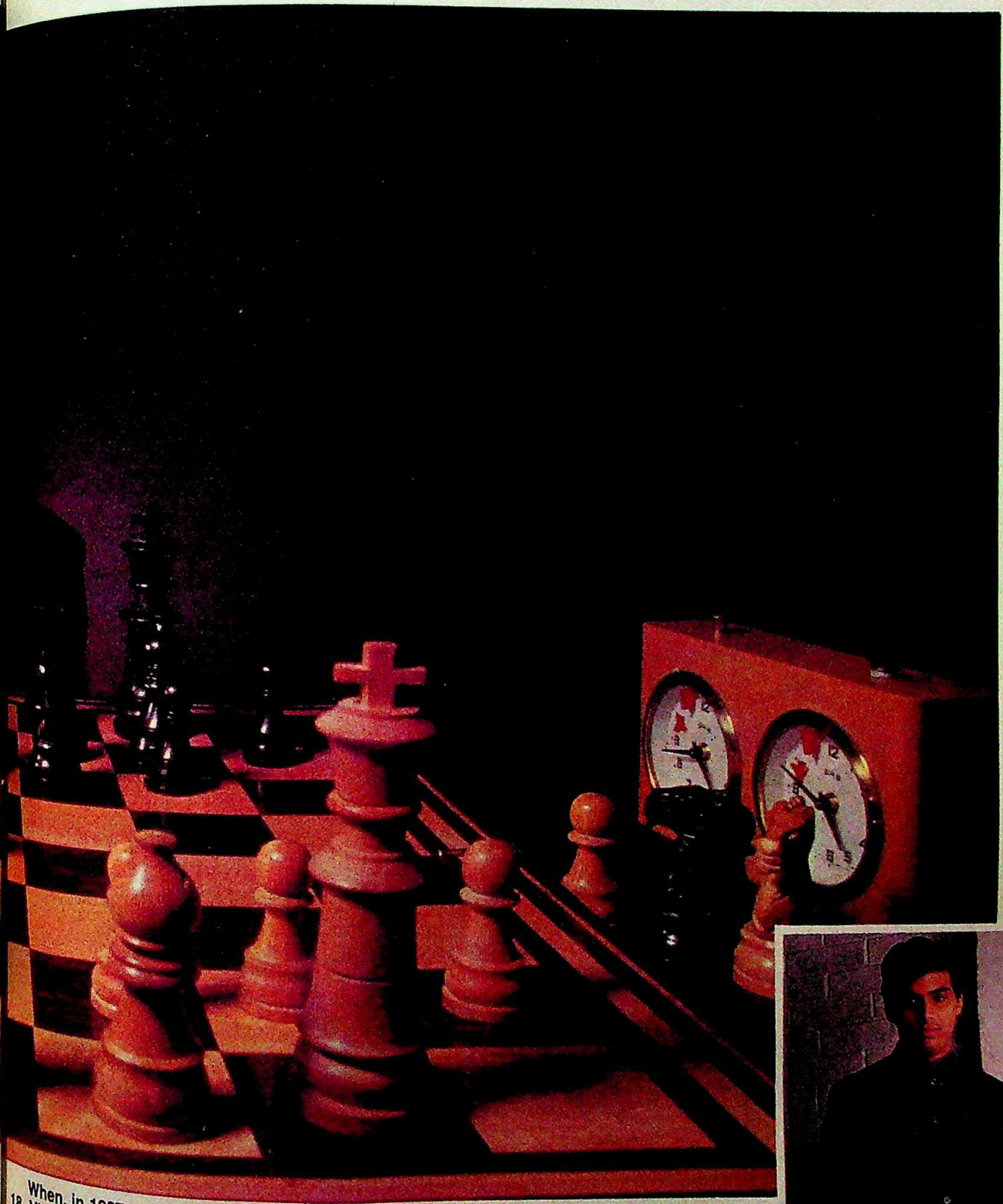

When, in 1987 at the age of 18, Viswanathan Anand became India's first grandmaster, he was also the world's youngest, launched on a brilliant career which would see him in 1989 beat former world champion Boris Spassky at the 4th International Games Festival in Cannes, France.

Too young to be checked by his own mates, still, he is not beyond making a few dashing moves when fittingly attired — e.g., in this blue/grey Jodhpuri made from a polyester-wool combination aptly called "Sapphire".

You don't have to be a jewel in India's chess crown to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

... but it helps.

Raymond's

Never say no to life.

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Over the Hump

Stars, sponsors, technology finally bring sports in the big league

THE images were as confusing as they were varied: good and bad, of glory and ignominy, of youth triumphing over experience or age sidelining exuberance, of a team of average skills lifting itself to dizzy heights or of a favourite crashing out in a manner only Indian teams seem capable of. But, happy or unhappy, the sporting images that the '80s leave behind are enduring.

There was, after 16 long years, the spectacle of an Indian team lifting the hockey gold at the Olympics—even if it happened to be the truncated one at Moscow. There was the Indian cricket team, Prudential World Cup in its bag, showering champagne from the latticed balcony at Lords and later bathing a greying Sunil Gavaskar with the bubbly potion of victory at Melbourne after the Benson and Hedges World Cup. There was P.T. Usha at one meet after another, displaying a fistful of gold medals. There was Ramesh Krishnan propelling India into the Davis Cup final. And at decade-end there was the arrival of a fresh crop of stars: Sachin Tendulkar and Sanjay Manjrekar, chess grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand, middle-distance runners Bahadur Prasad and Ram Niwas, and tennis champion Zeeshan Ali.

There were disappointments too. The lithe figure of P.T. Usha at Los Angeles failing by a microsecond to get India's first ever athletics medal at the Olympics, Kapil Dev holing out to M Gatting to hit India out of the Reliance Cup semi-final, Sh Abraham, after her record-breaking 800-metre run at the S Asiad, breaking into tears as the judges disqualified her. there was plain ignominy: Indian cricketers blackwashed b West Indies, Usha hobbling her way past the hurdles to finish at the Seoul Olympics and India finishing at the bottom o pool in the 12-nation World Cup hockey at London in 19

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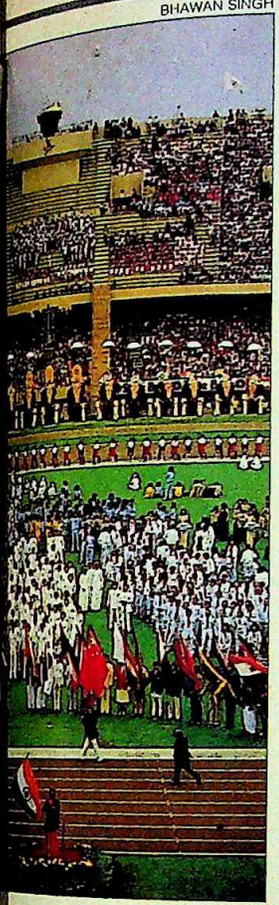
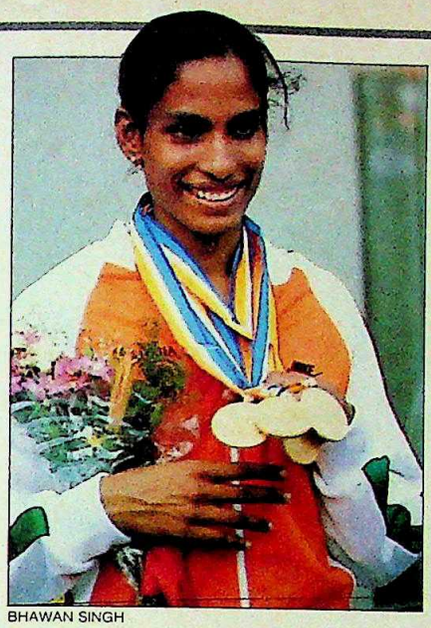
BHAWAN SINGH





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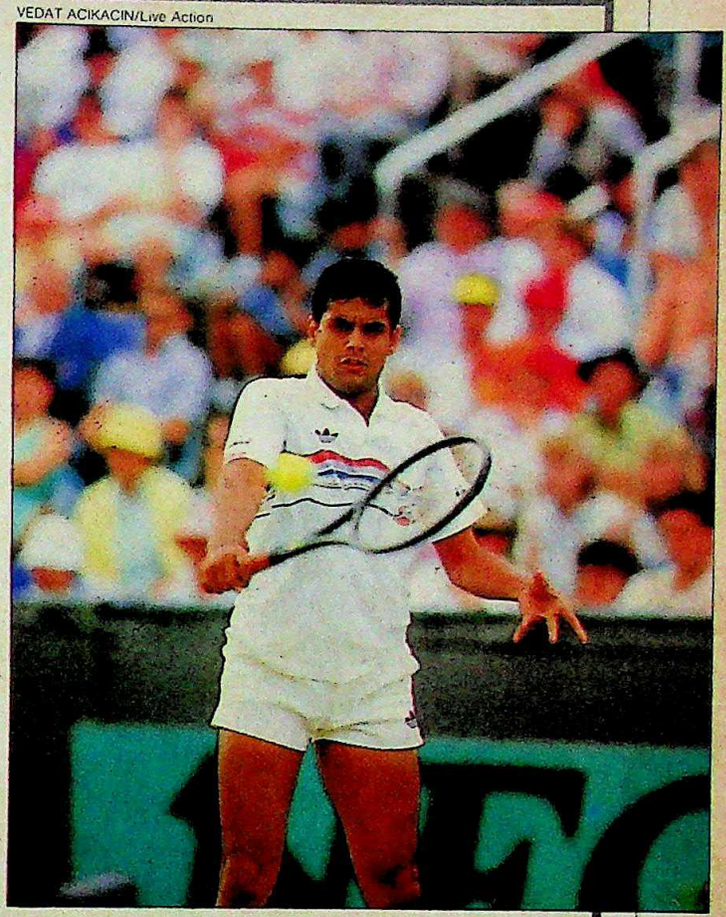

Victories in cricket and tennis underlined Mrs Gandhi's words: "India can do it."

(Clockwise from left) Benson & Hedges Cup winners; Asiad opening ceremony; Usha at Seoul; Krishnan in Davis Cup final

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THE arrival of corporate money and a whopping increase in official patronage with the formation of the Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India removed only one of the perennial hurdles of Indian sport. Many more still remained to be crossed. First of all there was politics which continued to bug sportsmen and organisers and frustrate the sport lover. It is ample reflection on the mood of the '80s that some of the most memorable quotes from sportsmen refer to politics in sports. Mohinder Amarnath came out with the memorable "bunch of jokers—why should I take any bullshit from the selectors", and cricketers humbled the board in the Supreme Court and formed an association to formalise the cold war. A member of the women's golden relay quartet came out with an equally telling: "I'll give up running if Suresh Kalmadi (president of the National Athletics Federation) can tell the distance between two hurdles." Vijay Amritraj ran a decade-long private war with the lawn tennis federation. As for other sports, hockey, football, women's hockey, shooting and archery, the less said the better. Perhaps fittingly in

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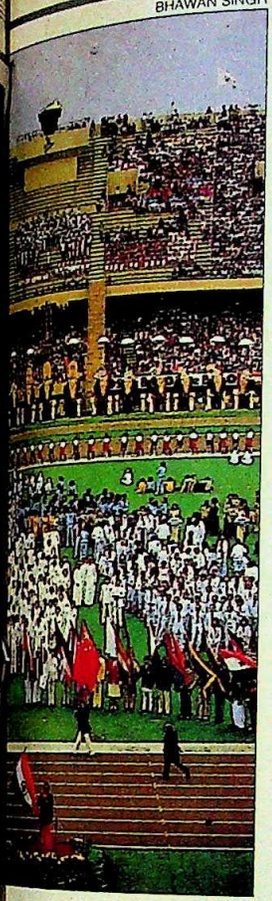

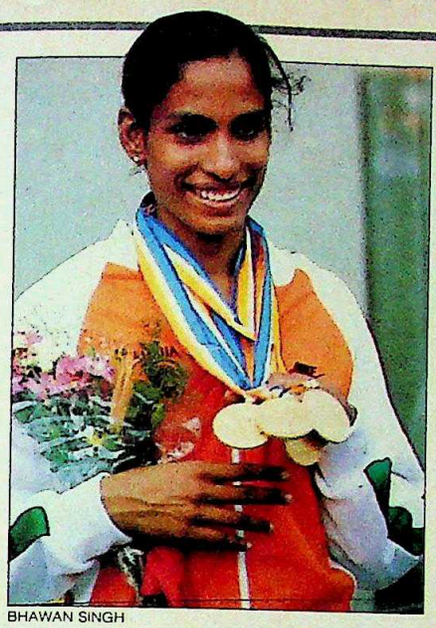

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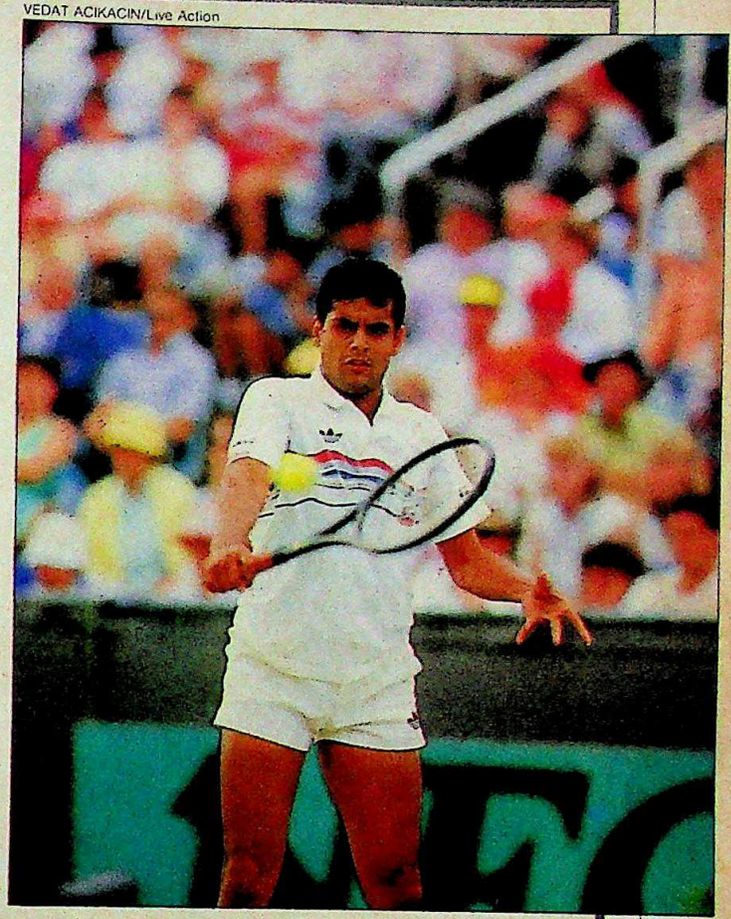

Victories in cricket and tennis underlined Mrs Gandhi's words: "India can do it."

(Clockwise from left) Benson & Hedges Cup winners; Asiad opening ceremony; Usha at Seoul; Krishnan in Davis Cup final

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Smooth take-off from Sydney.
Soaring over the seas.
Singapore at sunrise.
Strong morning tea.
And twin blade pleasure.

Touch of steel on skin.
Slice of lather in a stroke.
Cool smooth shave.
A Wilman shave.

Shaving Systems
Wilman II
Smooth days begin this way

Mudra:Bir

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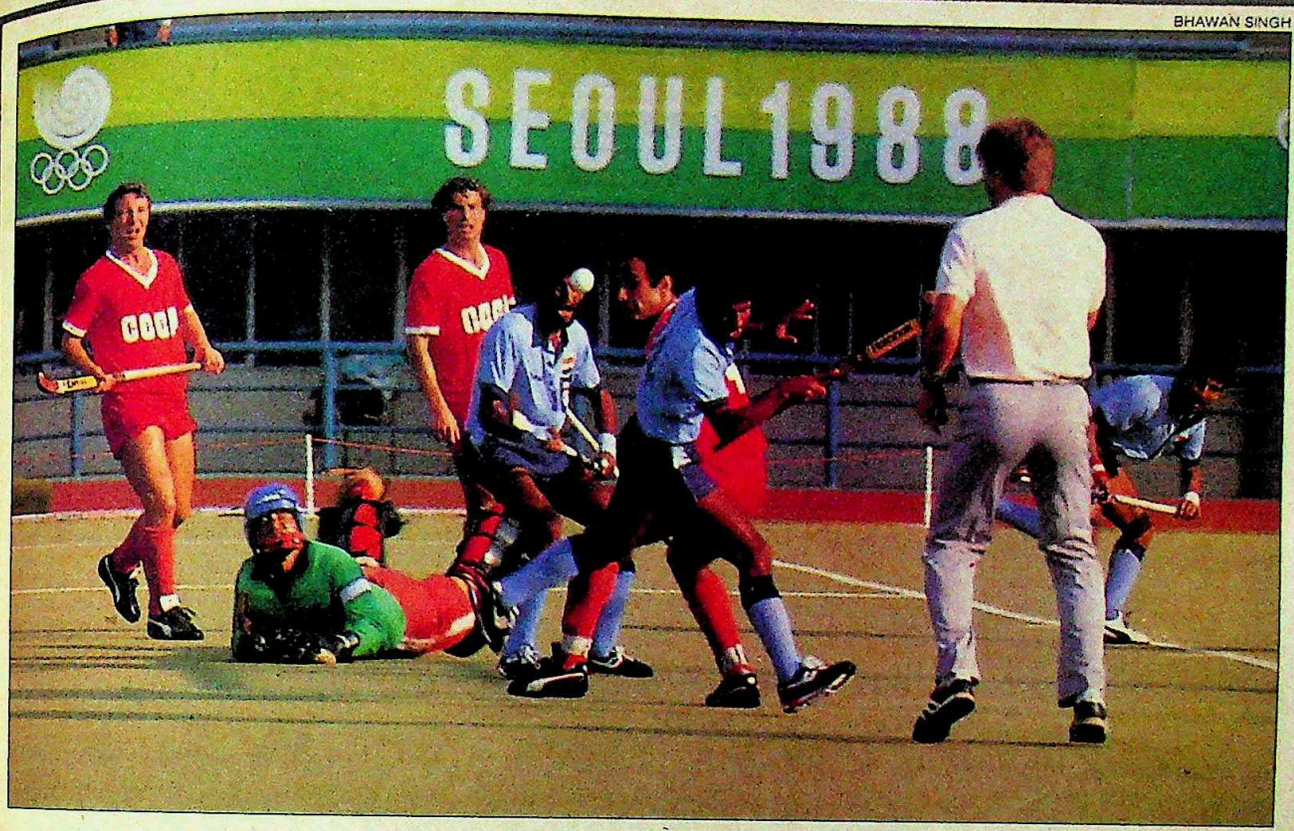
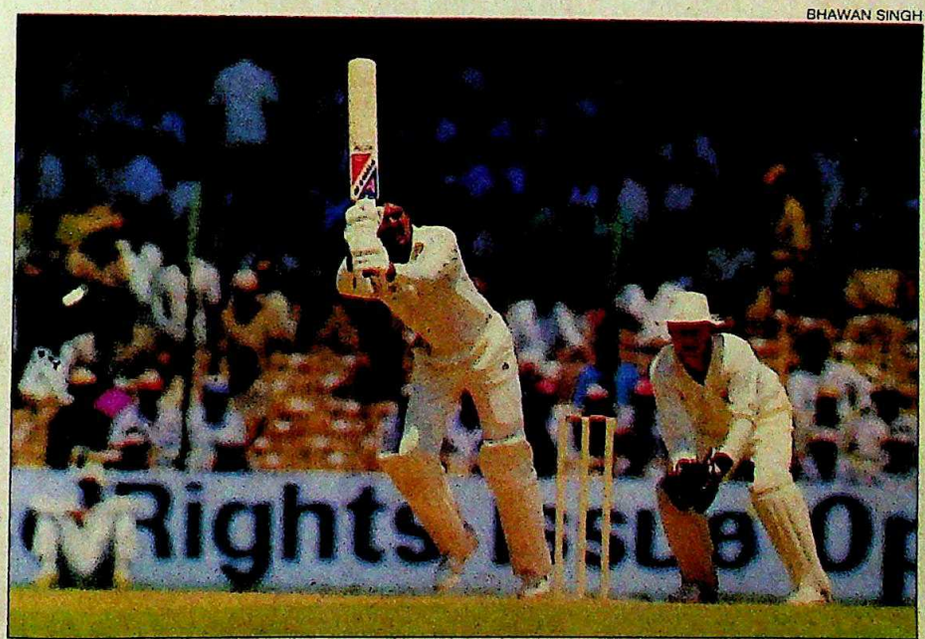


Lack of a killer instinct saw talented Indians fail time and again.

"Kya batayen, kya hua. (How do we say what happened).

Vineet Kumar on India's finishing fifth in hockey at Los Angeles"

BHAWAN SINGH



India fail to make hockey semi-final of Seoul (top); and Kapil holes out in Reliance Cup semi-final: so near yet so far

the game of sporting politics, sportsmen were beaten by a mile by the politicians. The longest, the most debilitating and embarrassing fight of the decade was the one between former minister of state for sports Margaret Alva and Kalmadi.

The other drawback of Indian sports—lack of killer instinct—remained, but there were a few signs that things could be changing, mainly with the entry of an aggressive new breed of youngsters. The remarkable last lap run by the unfancied Arjun Devaiya in the men's 1,600-metre relay, that almost upset the favourite Japanese at the Asian Track and Field, is an image that Indians will savour for years. There was also 16-year-old Sachin Tendulkar refusing to go off the ground after a bouncer left his nose bleeding, and then smacking the same bowler for two boundaries in the same over. Twice in a year the national hockey team, stung by the humiliation handed out to them by South Koreans at the Seoul Asiad, hammered the new claimants to international status by four, and five goals respectively, not relenting after the customary goal or two. And Indian sportsmen were talking a different language too. "Agreed the West Indies are good. But that doesn't mean we should lie down and say, 'come, screw us'," said Kapil Dev in a manner only Australian cricketers were known to speak in the past. There was still a long way to go, but there were ample indications that the Indian sportsmen

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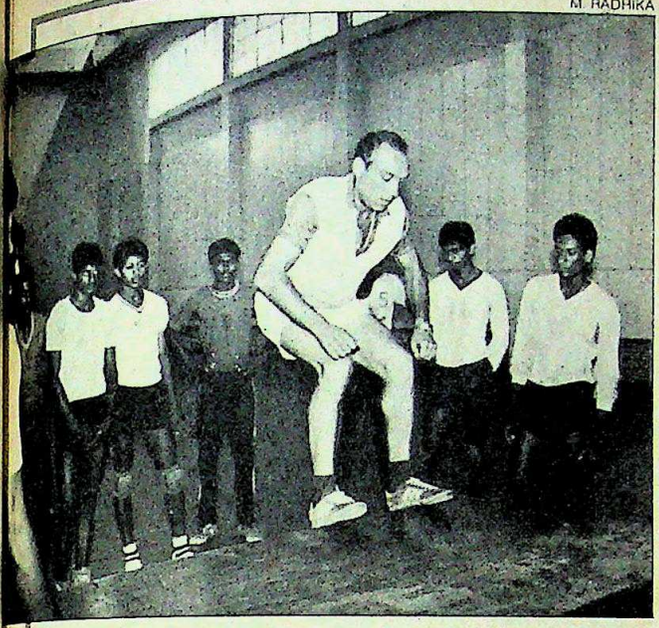

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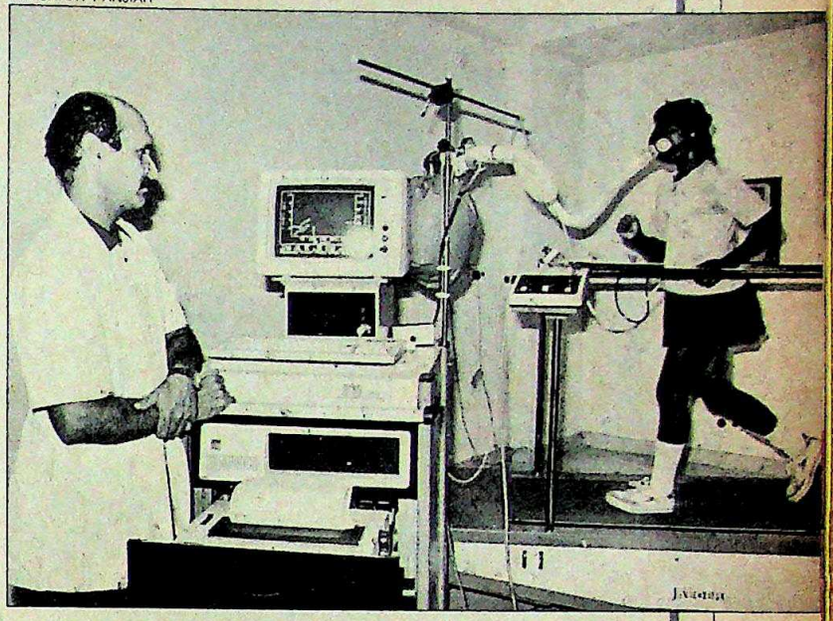

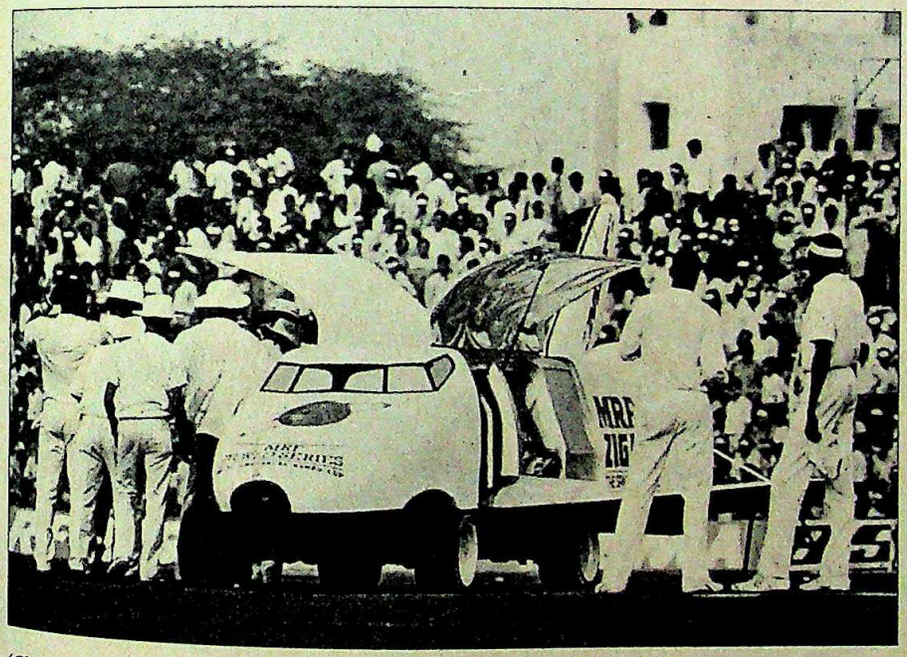

Sponsorships, foreign coaches, and TV changed the face of Indian sport.

"Why ask the Government when the corporate world is so keen to help?"
Athletics body chief Suresh Kalmadi

(Clockwise from top left) Soviet coach training volleyball players; high-tech equipment and space-age MRF drinks trolley

were no longer content being the world's best, gentlest losers.

In fact, the three outstanding individual efforts epitomising the continuity and change from the '70s through the '80s into the '90s—by Gavaskar, Usha and Vishwanathan Anand—all came through grit, determination and the motivation for victory and individual excellence. Gavaskar defied lapses into poor form, widespread media criticism and heckling even by the home crowds, to get back into the groove that saw him cross Don Bradman's 29-century-mark with a hundred in just 94 balls at Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla and that too against the West Indies fast attack at its sharpest. He followed it up with a double century and finally hung his gloves after going well past the 10,000-run mark. Usha defied injury, which had almost written off her career, and Vishwanathan Anand struggled gamely against apathy in a sport that has few backers or sponsors in the country.

Much changed with the sports themselves internationally, and within the country. Test cricket, once the biggest draw, was in danger of extinction as thousands piled into the stadia for one-dayers while the five-day affairs were witnessed by the proverbial three drunks and a dog. Unless modifications are made to make the Tests more decisive, the slam-bang variety of cricket will soon make old-fashioned cricket irrelevant. Besides the arrival of one-day cricket, the decade also saw the concept of cricket-season fading. International cricket is now played round the year, even in the desert of Sharjah on turf imported from England.

THERE were changes elsewhere too. As dope tests became an integral part of international athletics, many Indian athletes increasingly found it difficult to repeat at international meets their better performances at domestic trials, supervised by more benevolent doctors. That, in fact, accounted for the rapid fade-out of some of the stars thrown up by Asiad '82.

Another firm trend the decade established was the progress

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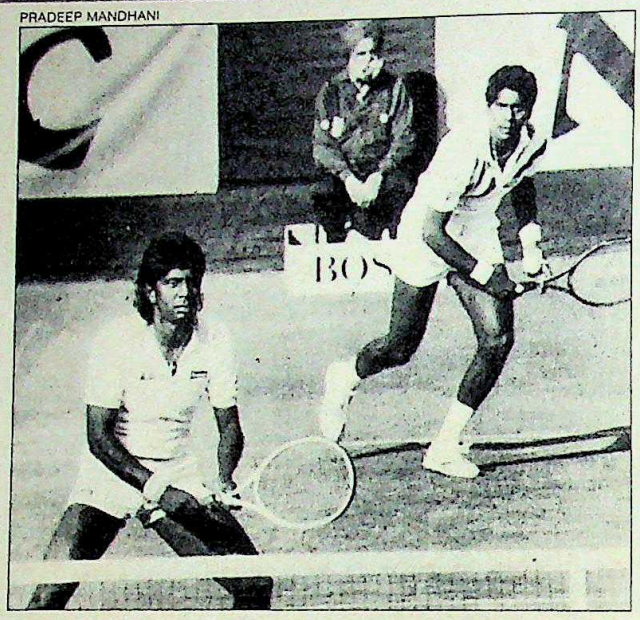

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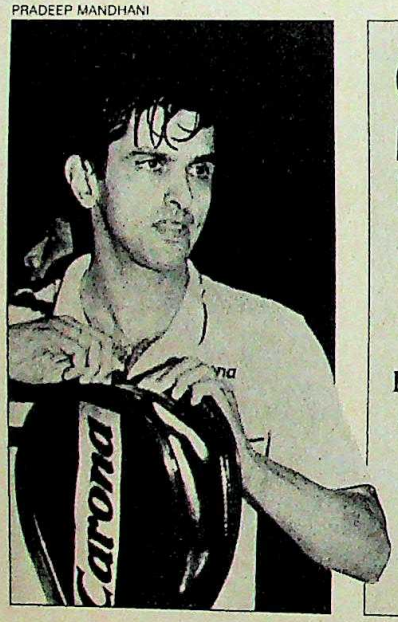
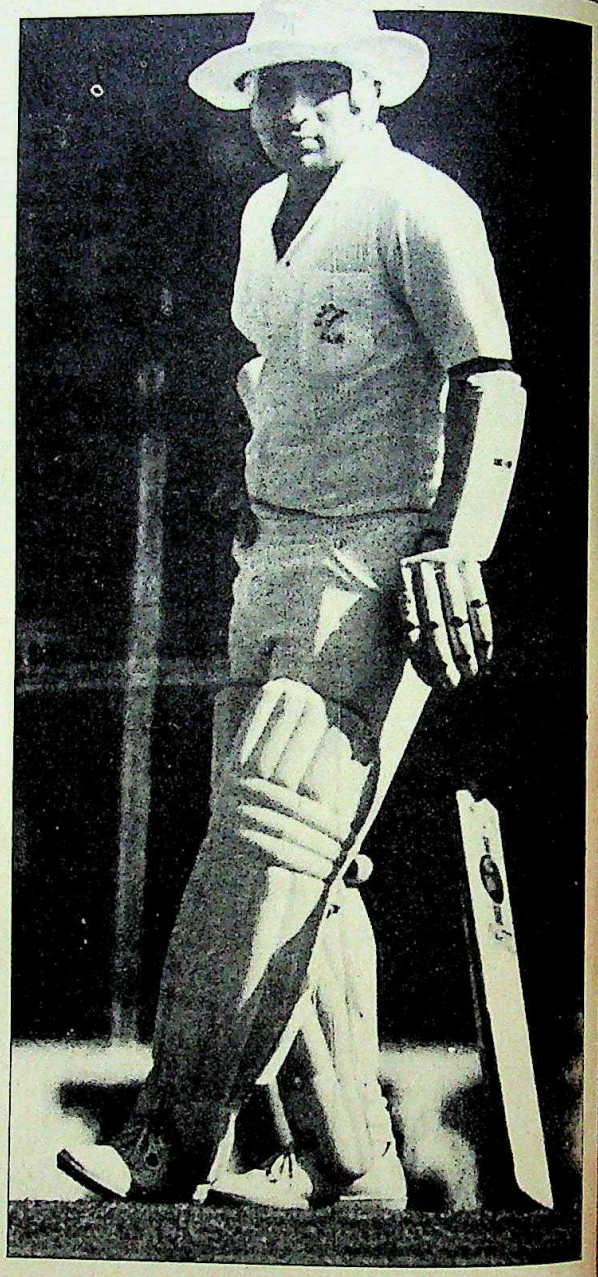


Stars who'd long straddled Indian sport retired.

"It's sad I still have to play for India. I wish others would take over."

VIJAY AMRITRAJ



(Clockwise from top) The Amritraj brothers; Sunil Gavaskar and Prakash Padukone: passing the baton

made by Indian women, particularly in athletics where they left the men far, far behind. Indian athletics records are some of the most durable in the world and many, in the men's category, have been in the record books for two decades despite the replacement of cinder with the faster, artificial tracks since then. At the end of the decade only three Asian athletics records stayed with India, all in the women's category.

Not surprisingly a mid-'80s study at the National Institute of Sports (NIS), Patiala, showed that Indian women have progressed in athletics at a much faster rate than even Chinese and Japanese women, and are streets ahead of their male counterparts. The mean percentage improvement rate recorded by Indian women was 6.11 per cent while the Chinese and Japanese figures were 4.53 per cent and 3.33 per cent. There is a steady stream of new sprint talent. There is also a high jumper of promise in Angela Lincey and the current crop of youngsters under training could bring back the old Indian strength in women's middle-distance running. In women's athletics, the greatest contribution of the '80s is the creation of a culture of excellence and a core-group of ambitious, hard-working youngsters approaching the top status.

FORTUNATELY, much the same could also be said of the other sports. So, in cricket if the most enduring images of the '80s were a Gavaskar cover drive, a Vengsarkar straight drive or a Kapil Dev outswinger, the '90s could be remembered for Sanjay Manjrekar's stingray square-cut, Sachin Tendulkar's on-drive and Vivek Razdan's bouncers. On the track, the figure of Usha, her elbows pumping, propelling her to glory, could be replaced by Bahadur Prasad's relaxed strides to the tape and victory. And India's traditional strength in indoor sports will be maintained by a Geet Sethi who can only grow in a sport where world championships have been won by 75-year-olds and a Vishwanathan Anand, already in the world's top 50 and with victories against Mikhail Tal and Boris Spassky under his belt. Zeeshan Ali promises to do better.

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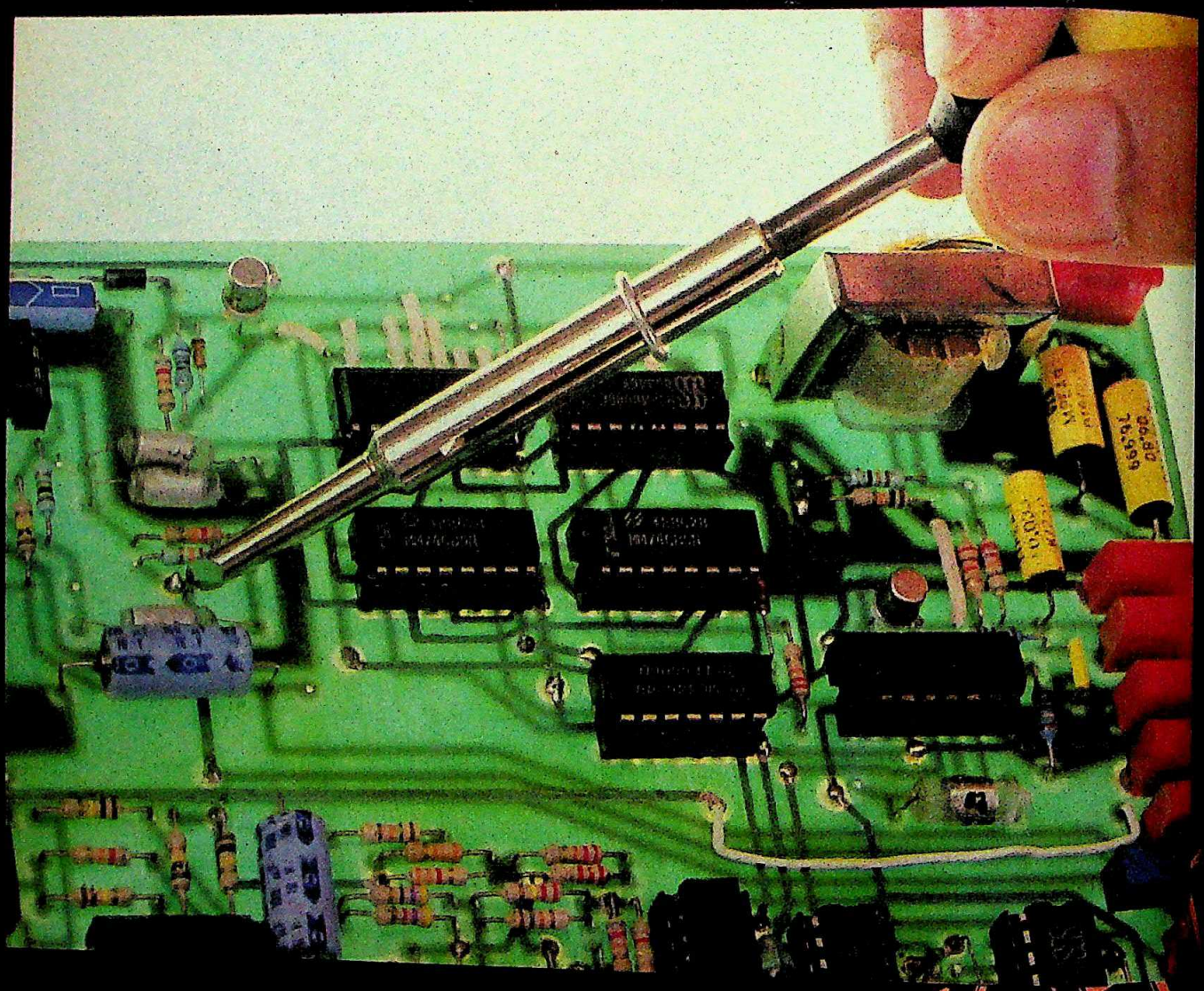

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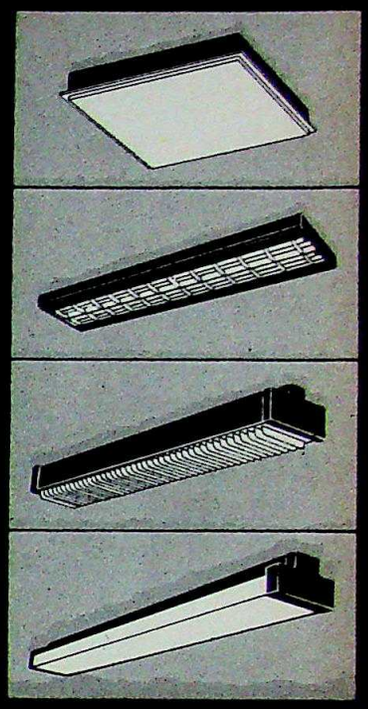

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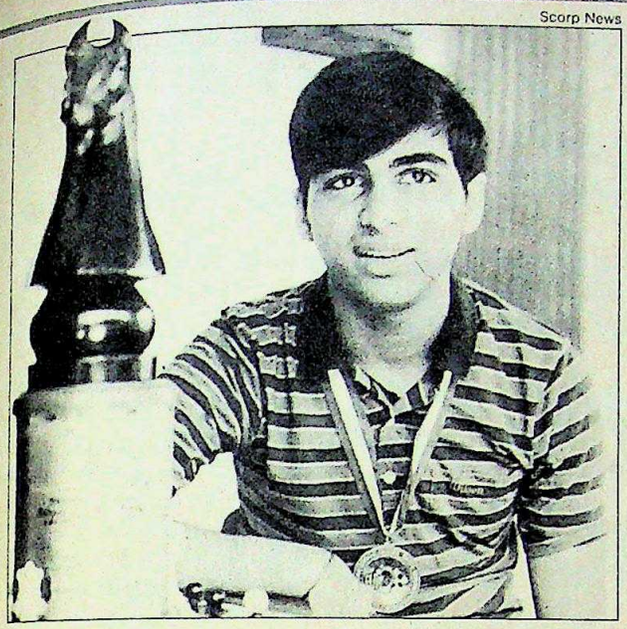

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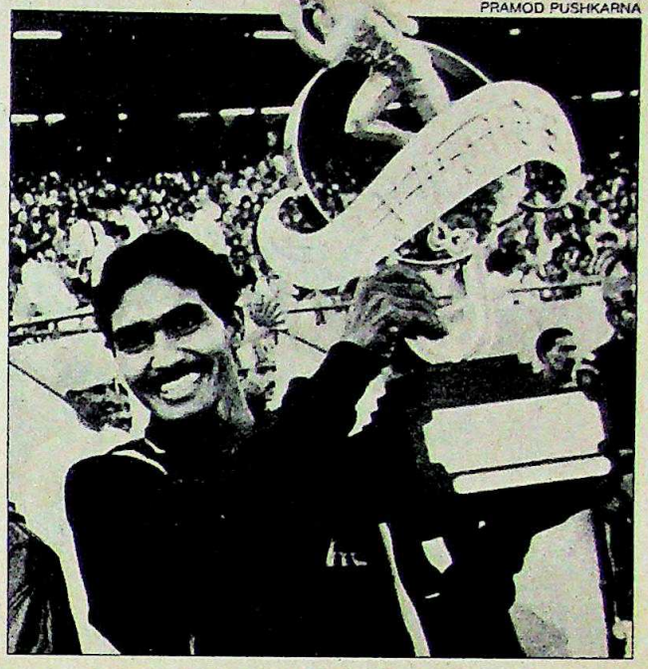

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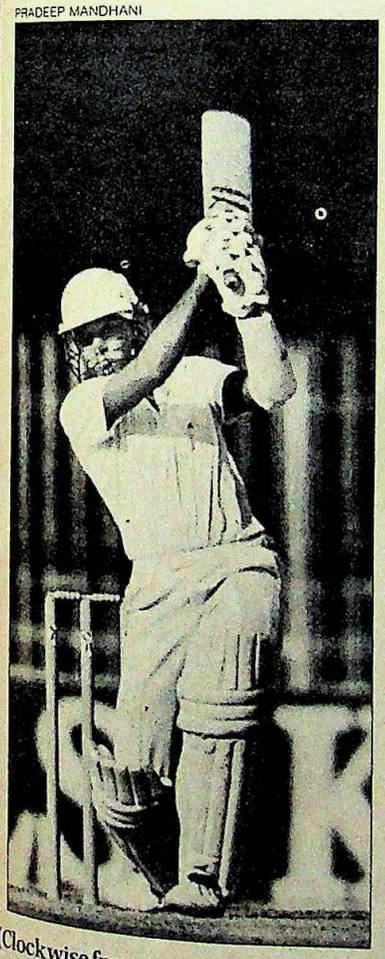
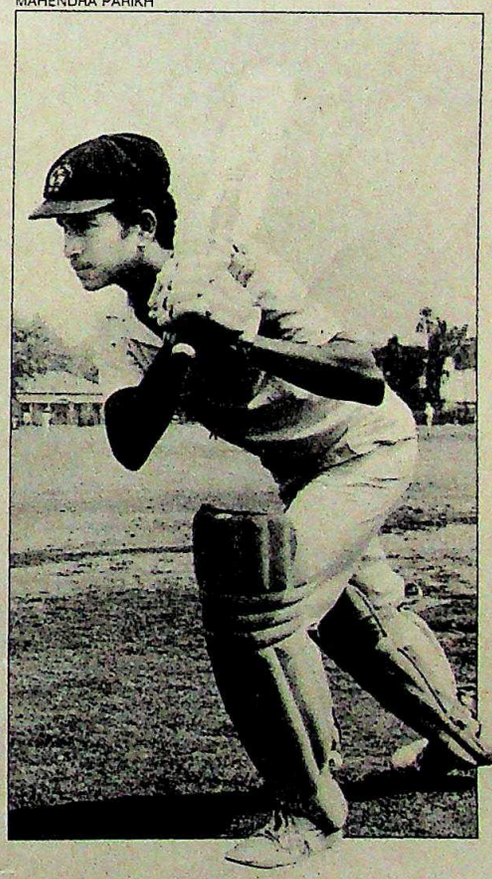


New talent bids to liven up the '90s sports scene.

"I'm not conscious of my pedigree. I am a batsman in my own right.
SANJAY MANJREKAR
on the reference to his father

I don't consciously play quickly. I just get bored easily.
VISHWANATHAN ANAND
after some quick wins"

MAHENDRA PARIKH



(Clockwise from top left) Vishwanathan Anand; Bahadur Prasad; Sachin Tendulkar and Sanjay Manjrekar: hope of the '90s

but it is a bit early to say if he will be a worthy replacement for Vijay Amritraj or Ramesh Krishnan.

The decade also had its share of tragedies. While hockey captain Surjit Singh died in a road accident in Punjab, volleyballer Jimmy George's career was cut short by a car crash in Italy where he was playing for a club. Badminton ace Syed Modi fell to an assassin's bullets in Lucknow. Equally shocking was the death of a young gymnast after he fell off the Roman ring during the national championships held at the NIS, Patiala, in 1980. He landed on boards instead of the regulatory soft foam cushions. But worst of all, and perhaps a reflection of our times when the gun threatened to become the most dominant influence on our lives, was the gunning down of Pan Singh, an international-level athlete who turned a dacoit in the Chambal ravines. Yet, as the '80s yielded to the '90s, the images that endured were of glory and hope. That is something to say for the Indian sports enthusiast for so long inured to disaster and ignominy on the sports pages. —AMARNATH K. MENON

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A Fluent Flowering

Indo-Anglian writing comes of age, as major writers emerge

WITH a failed sci-fi fantasy effort—that defied understanding—behind him, an advertising copywriter in London in the late '70s decided to shift literary tack. He took a deep whiff of the winds that were scouring the Latin American literaryscape, and intoxicated by the pollen of magical realism they bore, he dove into his past and that of his country. Three years later he surfaced with a masterwork that dazzled the English-speaking world, and earned him a rank in the forefront of world novelists.

It also did more. *Midnight's Children*—and later *Shame*—forever changed the tenor and substance of Indo-Anglian writing, unshackling it from the residual fetters of the Raj—with its concomitant pandering to the western palate, its linguistic atrophy, and its self-conscious restraint. Mixing history, myth and autobiography, Salman Rushdie's book operated at a fantastical level, successfully gaining a grasp on multi-layered Indian reality, which hitherto had permitted either a fiction of a simplified rural kind, or of the urban-angst variety. The only predecessor the book had was G.V. Desani's 1948 modern classic *All About H. Hatterr*. But while *Hatterr* was a forgotten masterpiece, bought by few and read by fewer, Rushdie's novel had the cash registers ringing madly.

The '70s had been dominated by non-fiction works: political and biographical quickies by the Kuldip Nayars, M.O. Mathais, and Janardhan Thakurs. But now the floodgates of fiction were opened for the emergence of a clutch of talented young writers who made the decade easily the most exciting ever for Indian writing in English.

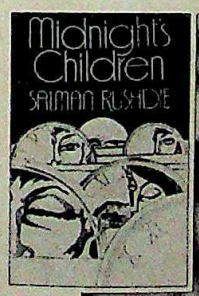
By an interesting coincidence, most of these writers sprang from New Delhi, in fact from the corridors of one college. Near contemporaries at St Stephen's, Amitav Ghosh, Allan Sealy, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Shashi Tharoor produced works quite different from each other's, yet uniformly exhibiting a remarkable ease with the language, an at-homeness that was not hitherto visible in Indian writing, and one that matched the best writing being done abroad. These writers also attempted books of a much greater scope, and the one truth the '80s brought home was that anyone wishing to encompass all of India's complex reality would have to, like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, write with a tinge of the fantastic.

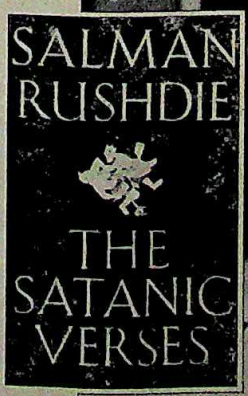
Ghosh it was who first picked up Rushdie's baton, with an impressive debut, *The Circle of Reason*. The book tramped the ground from an obscure village in Bengal to Mediterranean ports, and took in its sweep eclectic ideas and cultures. It was too long by 100 pages, and Ghosh's virile imagination began to flag towards the end. But the craft was of a high order, and above all, the book proudly reasserted the right to Indianisms—without the apologetic italic or quote-mark—that Rushdie had iterated. The explanatory glossary at book-end began to disappear; the Indian writer began to appropriate a language he had every right to own and mould.

The most spectacular affirmation of the Indian writer's claim on the English language came from California, where a diminutive Indian student—author of a forgettable first book of poems, *Mappings*, and an impressive travelogue, *From Heaven Lake*—struggling with the demography of China, digressed long enough to write a novel in verse.

Sonnet tripped over mellifluous sonnet, and *The Golden*

Rushdie proved a watershed figure: with his magic realist pen, he unshackled Indo-Anglian writing from the residual fetters of the Raj.





BHAWAN SINGH

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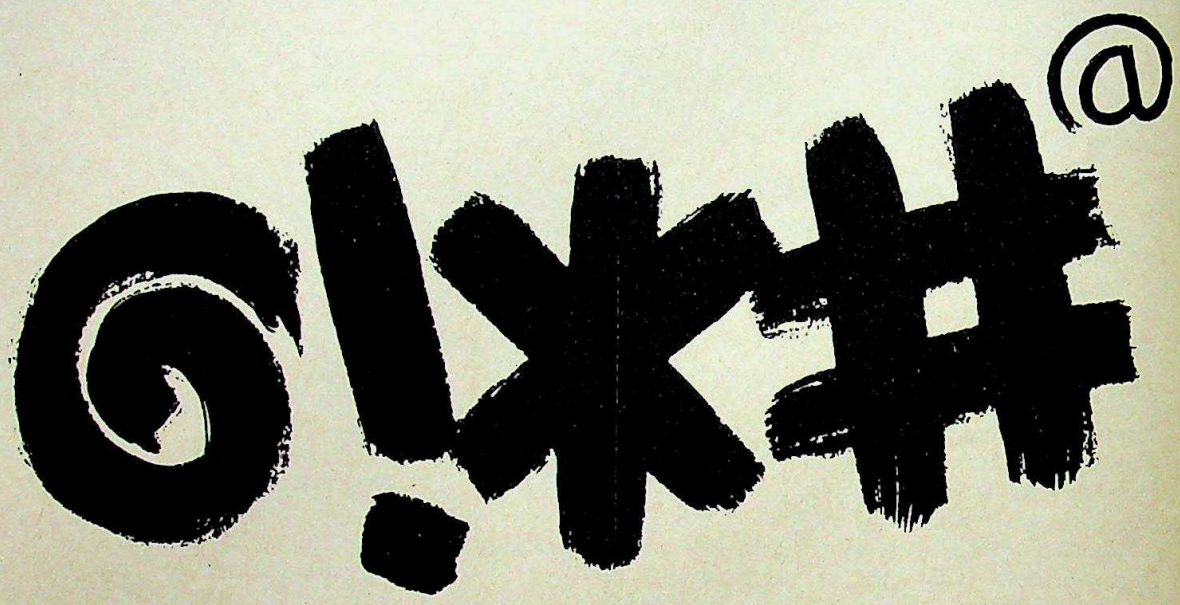

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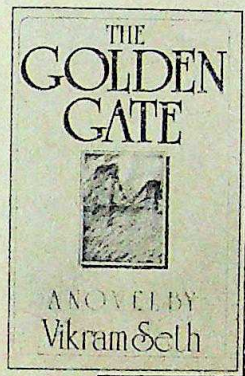
Gate, set in San Francisco and devoid of any character remotely from the orient, became a global best-seller. The book was thin in substance, but the form overwhelmed all such drawbacks. Indian writing had crossed another frontier. Vikram Seth had staked out fresh territory—he had inverted the ancient order: now it was the savant from the East who had gone West and written about it better than the West could do itself.

As the decade gathered years, it began to seem as if the fuse had been lit for a literary explosion that would fling out books and writers like shrapnel. Foreign publishers began to eye the Indian writer with a new interest, and the Indian media began to give increasing coverage to books and authors. Review pages and extracts of forthcoming titles became a regular feature. Books began to become news: bought, read, and discussed avidly. Perhaps the most significant impetus of the decade was provided by the entry of the premier imprint, Penguin Books, into India, for it set all manner of professionals from all walks of life to writing.

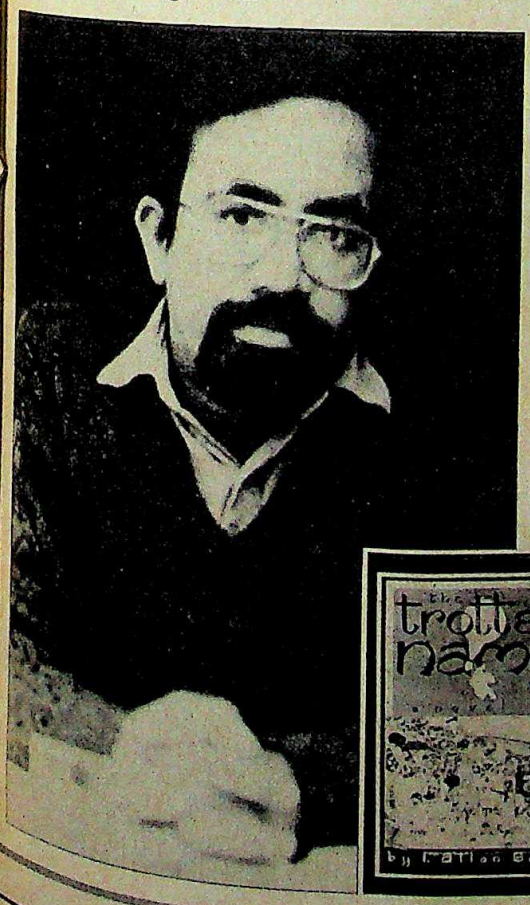
THE literary bomb finally detonated in the closing years of the '80s. And the one major talent who emerged was Allan Sealy, whose *The Trotter-Nama*, chronicling 300-odd years of Anglo-Indian life, displayed linguistic abilities unmatched by any contemporary Indian writer. Sealy's sprawling book had a Fielding-like playful tone and a Proustian digressiveness—essays on ghee, salamanders, balloons punctuated the narrative. Unfortunately, Sealy did not fetch quite the notice that he deserved.

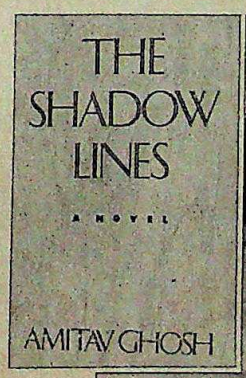
This decade-end explosion saw another important talent surface. A young bureaucrat, Upamanyu Chatterjee, wrote a

The '80s writer wrote with an ease that matched the best writing being done abroad.



ARADHANA SETH





SANJEEV SAITH

(Clockwise from right) Vikram Seth; Amitav Ghosh; and Allan Sealy: outstanding works

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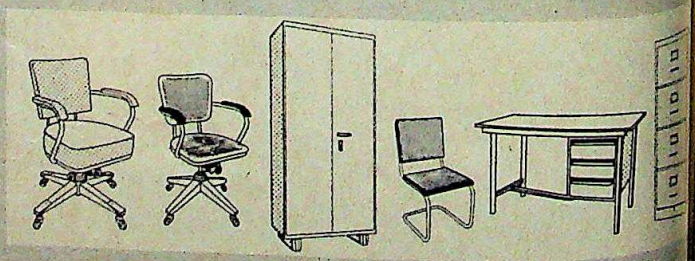

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austic, irreverent sort of *Bildungsroman* about an IAS officer osted in a mofussil town in Maharashtra, *English August, An dian Story*. The book was very competently written, but amid weeping sagas, minor in scope. Contrarily, Shashi Tharoor's *he Great Indian Novel*, was major in scope—using props from he epic *Mahabharata* to castigate recent Indian history—but iled to register itself as top-notch for it forsook the nuances of iterature by trying too hard to parody history and to stun with lever one-liners. Meantime, Ghosh consolidated his reputa-ion with a more finished book, *The Shadow Lines*, while Rushdie set the Thames, and the world, on fire with *The Satanic Verses*, whose literary merits were subsumed by its curio value.

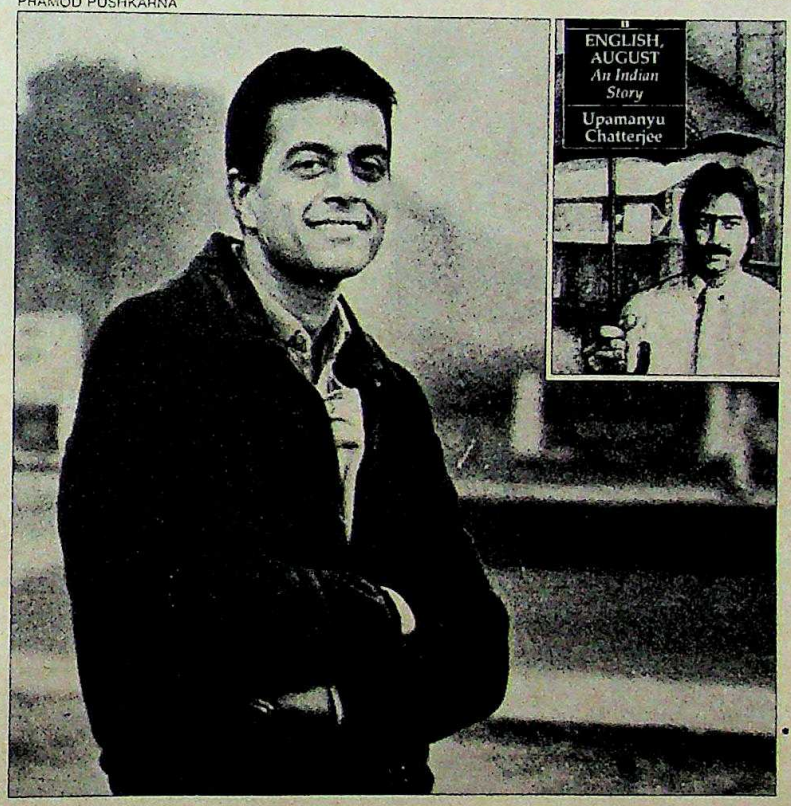
Inevitably so, exotica writing about India continued to lourish, with both Indians and foreigners belting out picture-postcard books about princes and the natives. Highly disap-ointing was the sight of even Gita Mehta, a talent of some note *Karma Cola*), putting out *Raj*, a kind of formulaic work about Indian royalty in the British era. The author, obviously, got her recipe right for copies screamed off the shelves.

MOST of the old *dadas* held their well-charted courses, refusing to be intoxicated by the vapours of breathless prose and experimentation. V.S. Naipaul produced *The Enigma of Arrival*, a brilliant autobiographical work—arguably his best since *Biswas*—which he typically insisted on calling *A Novel*. But then soon after he gave his several rabid critics much cause for glee with *A Turn in the South*, a desultory account of his travels in the American South.

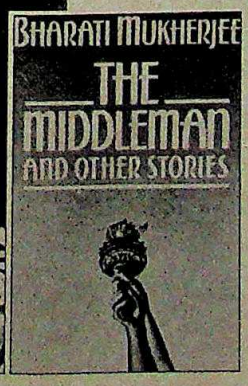
That die-hard anglophile Nirad C. Chaudhuri came out with a huge tome, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*, which earned innumerable reviews, but proved formidable reading. R.K. Narayan kept tracking the streets of Malgudi, neither giving up his style nor subject matter, nor reputation. Raja Rao emerged from hibernation with *The Chess-master and his Moves*, whose

Indianisms became acceptable and the Indian writer began to appropriate a language he had every right to own.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



(Clockwise from right) Chatterjee; Tharoor; and Mukherjee: skilled writing



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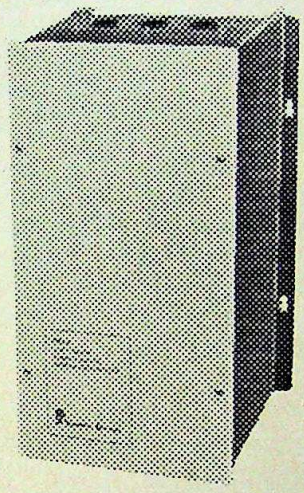

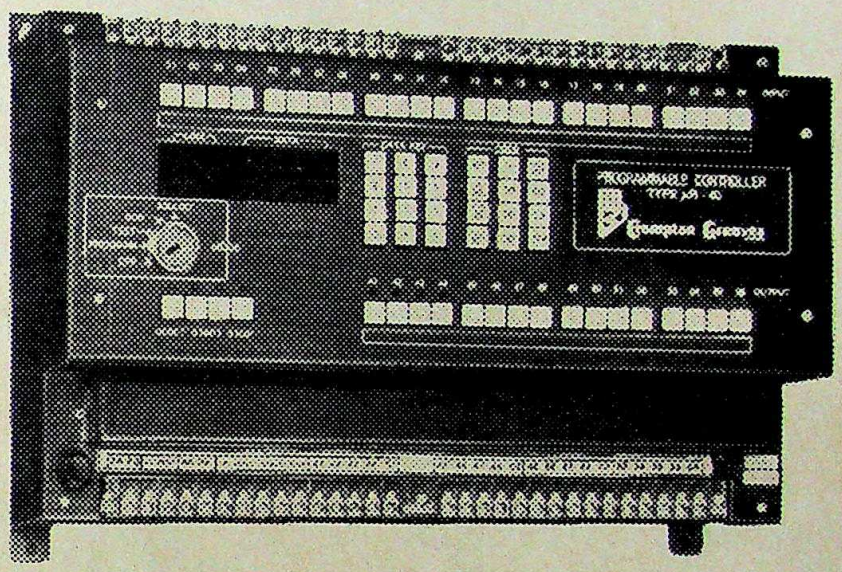

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long-winded metaphysics made it quite simply impenetrable.

Women writers had a prolific and fine run. US-based Bharati Mukherjee, giving up restraint for a greater exuberance, achieved dazzling fruition toward the end of the '80s. Her collection of short fictions, *The Middleman and other Stories*, on the immigrant experience was risque and effervescent and fetched such accolade as all her earlier work put together had not managed. But *Jasmine* which followed, turned out to be a strange book, somewhat in the manner of a *masala* Hindi film, with a panting pace and action, giving no time to its characters to settle in and develop. Anita Desai matured, shedding her overwrought prose, to produce significant works such as *The Clear Light of Day*, *Baumgartner's Bombay*, and *In Custody*. Nayantara Sahgal too added to her *oeuvre*, but her largely political novels, though they won a prize or two, were not important enough to bring her into major league.

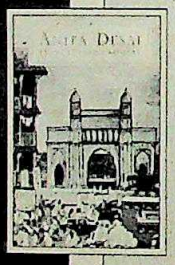
UNLIKE fiction, poetry had a flat 10 years. Surprisingly, no new voice which could reflect and move the '80s Indian soul broke out. The old masters continued to craft the superior line. Dom Moraes began to write again, and both Nissim Ezekiel and he, deservedly, had collected editions of their work put out. Jayanta Mahapatra took a seat in the front row with three collections, but unlike Moraes and Ezekiel failed to find a wide readership—as poetry readership goes—because he continued to prove slightly opaque.

The decade also saw the appearance of the top-notch bilingual writer, a breed India direly needs in order to ex the wealth of the literature of its several languages. Vijayan, set about translating his own contemporary M yalam classics, and did a first-rate job. And in virtually dying days of the decade, that grand old man Khushw Singh finally put out his opus, *Delhi*, after some 20-odd yea struggle. But the novel, ambitious in conception, seem unlikely to add to his reputation.

Though fiction was the toast, Indians in the '80s produced some excellent works of non-fiction. M.J. Akb *India: The Siege Within* and *Nehru: The Making of India* ga worldwide readership as did Inder Malhotra's biograph Mrs Gandhi. S. Gopal produced an outstanding accoun S. Radhakrishnan's life, and a good book on the crisis wi Islam was written by Rafiq Zakaria. The imminent releas some embargoed pages of Abul Kalam Azad's *India W Freedom* created a great fluster in the media, but eventually excitement proved unmerited.

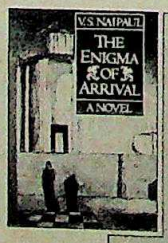
Warming the cockles of the heart at decade-end was fact that almost every Indian writer was hunched ove manuscript busy crafting second, third and fourth wor Better still, a groundswell of writer *manques* stood poised erupt into the '90s. Even though most may prove to be the s of hack, there is no denying that the '80s have created a In Anglian literary landscape, where earlier there existed onl cosseted pocket borough.

—TARUN J. TEJ



The old *dadas* held ground, refusing to be intoxicated by the vapours of breathless experimentation.

(Clockwise from below) Nirad Chaudhuri; V.S. Naipaul; R.K. Narayan; and Anita Desai staying on course



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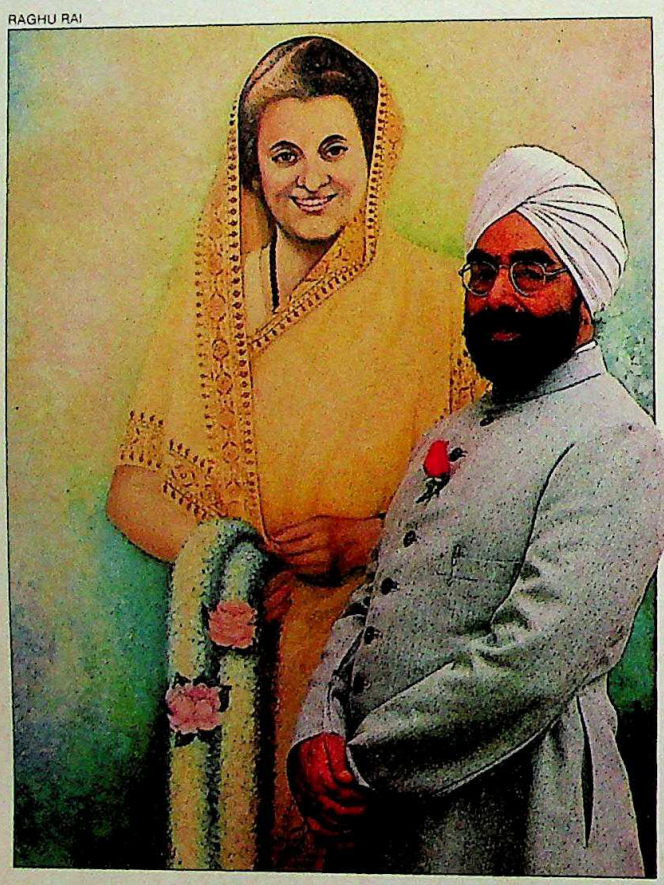
Stealing the Limelight

The good, bad or plain evil who created headlines

Presidential Somersault

■ Easily India's most controversial President, **Giani Zail Singh** created an unprecedented constitutional crisis when he came dangerously close to dismissing Rajiv Gandhi's government at the height of the Bofors scandal. The irony was lost on no one. The man who once declared that he'd happily sweep the floor if only Mrs Gandhi asked and played a key role in getting Ra elected prime minister almost succeeded in writing *fin* the Nehru dynasty's rule. The Giani's folksy style and rustic Punjabi humour ensured that Rashtrapati Bhava was never far from the headlines. For a self-confessed professional politician, the ornamental role of Preside clearly proved restrictive. For the first time, Rashtrapa Bhavan became a power centre where conspiracies w hatched. He even claimed he had been offered Rs 40 crore to dismiss Rajiv. But in the anti-climax of the dec the Giani backed off and slid into retirement, penning h memoirs and awaiting his return to the political *akhara*

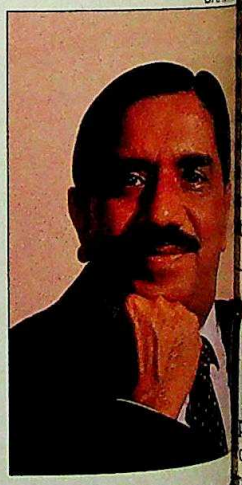
RAGHU RAI



Formidable Jeeves

■ If Bertie Wooster had been prime minister, **Rajinder Kumar Dhawan** would have been Jeeves. He was type-cast for the role; obsequious yet influential, shadowy but all-powerful. Once Mrs Gandhi's stenographer, Dhawan's loyalty and political savvy ensured that he became her chief hatchet man. He was by her side when she was killed but found himself cold-shouldered by Rajiv and hounded by the Thakkar Commission inquiring into the assassination. Cannily, he bided his time. And was rewarded when Rajiv appointed him as h political trouble-shooter with Rajiv's defeat, Dhawan again has a lo wait before he can go ba to being a mover and sh

BHAWA



The Italian Sphinx

■ As inscrutable as a Chinese sphinx, **Sonia Gandhi** managed to complete five years as India's First Lady virtually in *purdah*. Bets were taken on how often she'd smiled in public. And the only occasion she spoke—that too in the US—she just said: "Jai Hind." She stayed, expressionless, in the background, while wild rumours circulated about her alleged backroom politicking. foreigner, flung into India's political whirlp happy *hausfrau* pitchforked into the spotlight, her husband targeted by terrorists Sonia was clearly ill-equipped to play quee She resisted joining politics and stuck to h friends. Her only visi political role was to h Amethi, and here she was more of a succes as India's First Lady.

BHAWAN SINGH

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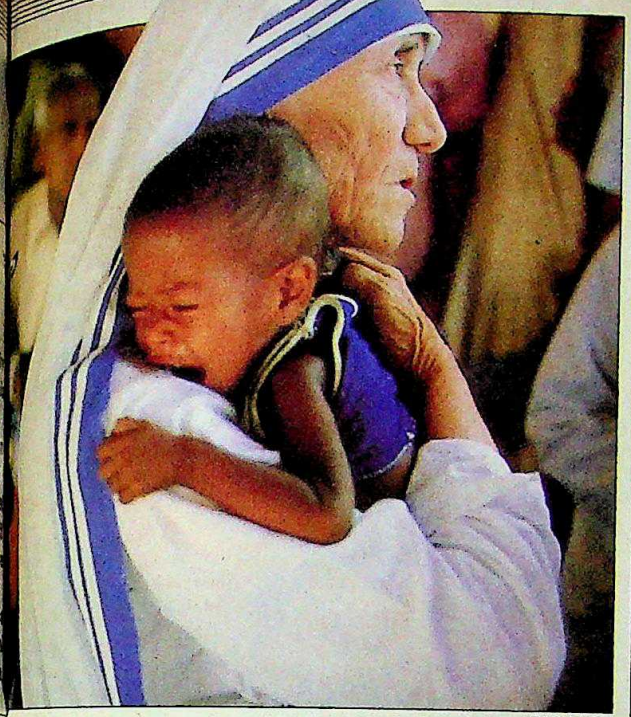


RAGHU RAI

other of Inspiration

In an era dominated by violence, the frail figure of other Teresa, 79, acquired the universal halo of a dern saint. In her own humble way, the gentle nun vered over the '80s, becoming an international celebrity d a radiant beacon of hope and world peace. In ated acknowledgement, she was awarded the Nobel ze for peace on the eve of the decade—and the Bharat ina in 1980. Whether it was West Beirut, Nellie, or famine-Ethiopia, Mother Teresa was there showering love d solace on the unfortunate. Last year, in a reversal of es the world prayed for her, as she lay hospitalised in lcutta, a heartbeat away from death. A pace-maker talled, the living saint has still not slowed down, her th driving her to heights of inspiration.

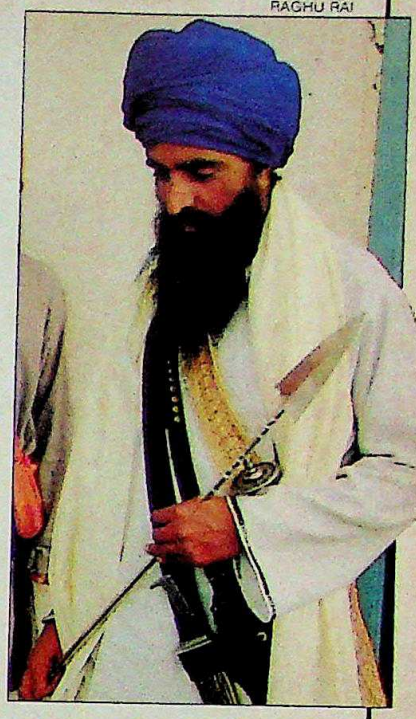
ccessful Space

For a nation perately in search of oes, Rakesh Sharma rally arrived out of the e. The Indian Air Force ter pilot became India's cosmonaut when he red into space aboard a et Soyuz T-11 ecraft. For an entire k, India forgot her bles to track his historic sey with childlike . His memorable remark ighting India from e, 'Sare jahan se achcha', me an anthem of and Sharma returned hero's welcome. He bolised the resurgence of 's space endeavours, one of the decade's major success stories. He may have piggybacked on the Soviets but he did give a badly-needed lift-off to Indian spirit and pride.

An Extreme Example

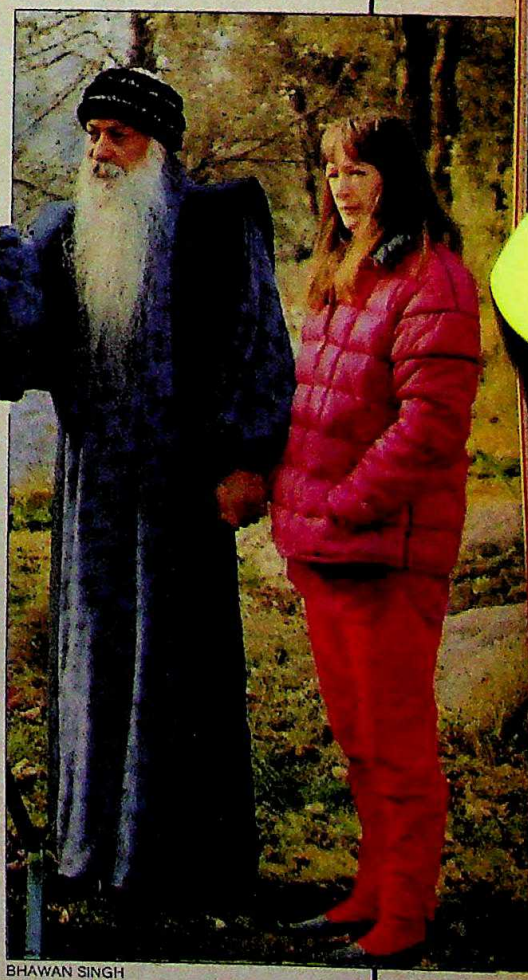
■ Few individuals have cast such a long and dark shadow over the Indian landscape. An obscure village priest, **Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale**, turned into a monster for his original political masters when he grew into a menacing symbol of Sikh terrorism. A fiery and mesmeric preacher, Bhindranwale in no time transformed Amritsar's Golden Temple from Sikhism's holiest shrine into a fortress for extremism and a rallying point for the call for a separate state of Khalistan. Killed in Operation Bluestar, the traumatic assault on the Golden Temple ordered by Mrs Gandhi in 1984, Bhindranwale became an instant martyr for thousands of Sikhs and lit the fires of terrorism in India.

RAGHU RAI



Controversy's Bhagwan

■ **It could only have been Oshomosis. The self-styled saint, Bhagwan Rajneesh added a fair amount of colour and controversy to the decade with his rapid identity changes: from Zorba in Oregon to his new *avatar*, Osho. In between, the guru of sex managed to get deported from the US, but not before acquiring no less than 93 Rolls Royces and scandalising American society with his zany brand of instant nirvana. He shuttled with his flock between Pune, Oregon, Manali and then back to Pune. In deference to the large number of Japanese who followed in his wake, he even changed his name to Osho. Sex was not quite out back home, but the AIDS scare led him to counsel his *sanyasins* to greet each other not with kisses but by yelling Yahoo! By the end of the decade he had written 600 books and earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records. Yahoo!**



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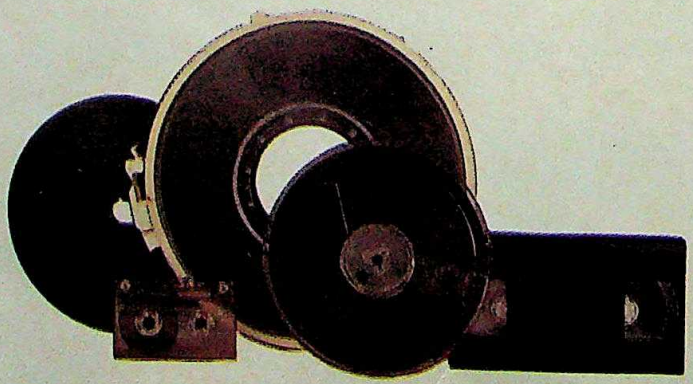

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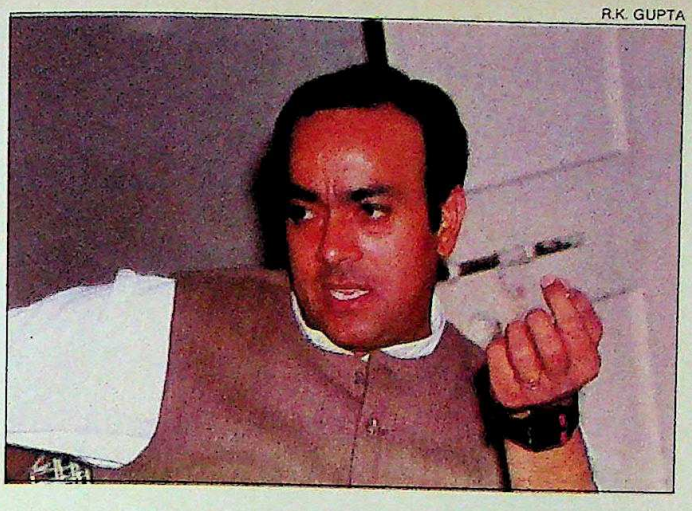
Style for Scandal

■ The real raja of Amethi—as opposed to Rajiv Gandhi—started off the decade by using his political clout to ensure that Rajiv won the Amethi seat by a record margin and then wound up opposing him by joining the Jan Morcha. Supposedly in retaliation, the CBI made **Sanjay Singh** the target of its investigations into the death of badminton star, Syed Modi. According to the CBI, the motive was Sanjay's alleged affair with Modi's wife, Ameeta. Undaunted, Sanjay continued with his brand of aggressive politics. But in keeping with the dictum about those who live by the sword, he was the victim of an election-related shoot-out, who almost succumbed to his wounds before recovering to fight another day.

R.K. GUPTA



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

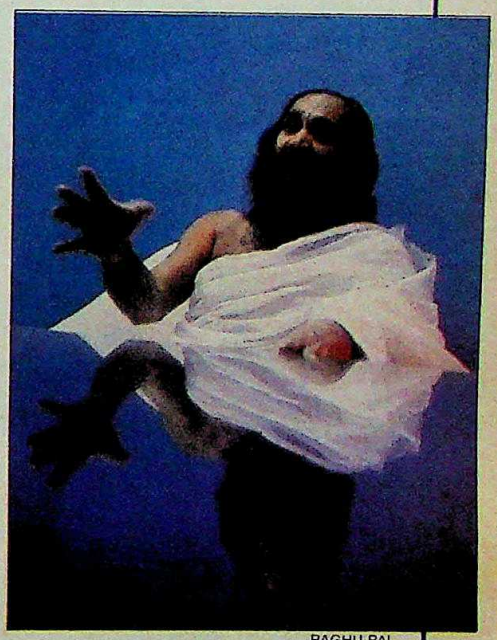
No Badlands Beauty

■ The so-called Beauty of the Badlands turned out to be nothing more than a crude, foul-mouthed and sluttish creature when she finally bid farewell to arms at a hyped-up surrender ceremony. The Dacoit Queen of the Chambal valley, **Phoolan Devi**, did, however, enjoy an exaggerated press which made her out to be a sexy, gun-toting avenger, running through her bandit paramours like bullets from a Kalashnikov.

But Phoolan's image came closer to reality when she spent a major part of the decade in jail and the world finally saw her as she really was, a greedy, grasping and ruthless woman of low virtue and lower ambitions, purely a creation of the media.

Vanishing Yogi

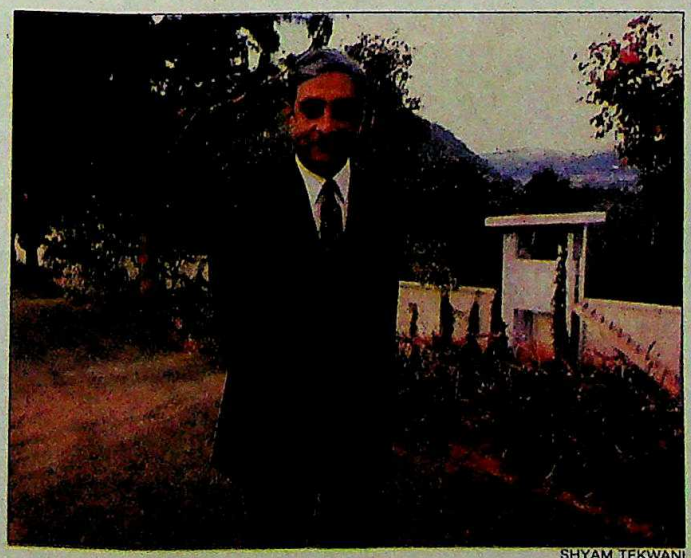
■ He certainly looked the part; his wiry, muslin-draped body topped with a flowing mane and beard. But Swami **Dhirendra Brahmachari**'s public image was anything but the godman and yoga teacher he professed to be. A man with no official standing, who acquired awesome power because of his proximity to Mrs Gandhi, Swami Dhirendra revelled in controversy—and the trappings of luxury, including one aircraft and imported cars. Whether as the alleged go-between in numerous deals or as owner of a gun factory, the swami dominated the headlines before surprisingly fading into obscurity.



RAGHU RAI

Generally Explosive

■ No other individual from the armed forces has been as controversial or high-profile as **General Krishnaswamy Sundarji**. India's first 'thinking general', Sundarji acquired the reputation of being trigger-happy by his involvement in Operation Bluestar, the Sri Lankan misadventure and Operation Brasstacks. After retirement, Sundarji exploded a bombshell by claiming that Rajiv Gandhi had soft-pedalled the Bofors inquiry. More controversial was the legacy he left behind in his attempts to drag the army into the 21st century. He introduced modern concepts to warfare and strategy, contributions that were obscured by the criticism of the activist, aggressive foreign policy he influenced as chief of army staff. In retirement, as a terrorist target, he lives in a secure house he calls Alcatraz.



SHYAM TEKWANI

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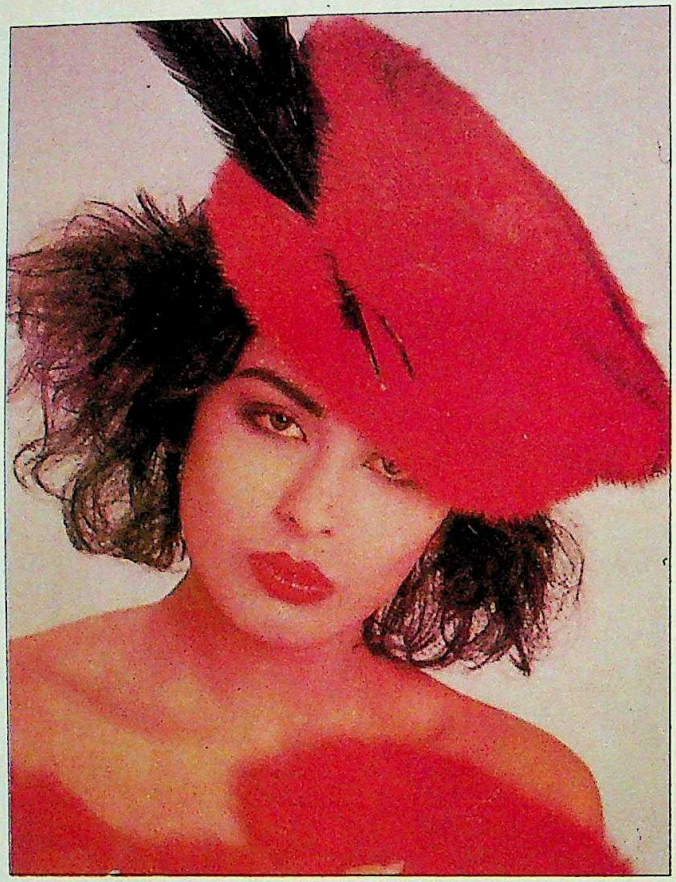
Laid-back Celebrity

■ The tabloids screamed: Slam, bam, thank you, Pam. And there was many an influential man in the world who owed gratitude to **Pamella Bordes** for favours given. For the Miss India of Haryanvi origin, the world had been an easy conquest. At the ripe old age of 27, she exploded in London in a scandal that made her an international celebrity. Her name was linked with a who's who line-up: Emir of Qatar, Prince Paul of Romania, Bill Wyman of *The Rolling Stones*, editors of *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*, and Tory MPs. But hers was no Profumo affair; no government collapsed. It was merely a scandal of money and sex, which helped push newspaper circulations.



Lovable Mascot

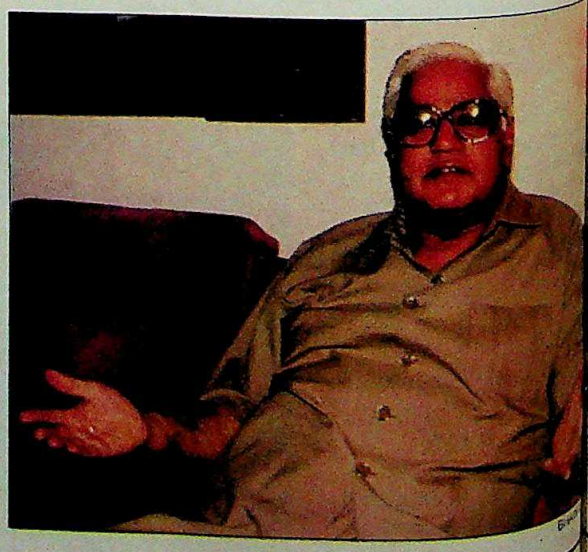
■ Weeks before her formal unveiling, she trumpeted her way into hearts of the nation—a month-old elephant, the spitting image of the 19 Asian Games mascot, w would stand on one leg garland the President at opening ceremony. The overnight, Appu became non-person. No, she did exist, Asian Games offic said. No, she was only a creation of the media. Th reason: fear of bad publicity that Appu had been ill-treated during training. And so, Appu's public career ended—be it had begun.

The Eternal Romantic

■ For four decades, Raj Kapoor's fingers held the pulse of the nation—making it vibrate to his tune. Finally, in June 1988, they let go their grip on life, having gamely battled with illness for several weeks in a Delhi hospital. The death was quite expected, a little like a scene from one of his films. And he tugged the heartstrings of millions of his fans as he knew how to do best: nostalgia for filmdom's greatest showman swept the country, and had everyone humming his timeless melodies for weeks on end. The ditties were not from his forgettable later films, but from his classics of the '50s when the Chaplinesque tramp had entertained with a socialistic message. The dream-merchant's death ended an era in Indian cinema. But his intimations of immortality had been coming true even in his own lifetime: *Mere jeevan sangeet, kal bhi koi dohraayega.*

Arms and the Man

■ **He had a distinguished 'Dr' prefixed to his name. Win Chadha was no innocent scientist lost amid ream esoteric calculations. A middleman for arms manufacturers, including Bofors—he held the key to the secret of the company's pay-offs—and the Rajiv government's survival. The government, on its part, treated him with kid gloves, meeting him at his convenience, allowing him to leave the country when going got too hot, and going very slow in prosecuting him. Now, with the new Government deciding to black Bofors, the 155 mm Howitzer shows every sign of swivelling around—and the unwinsome Chadha might have only one option: to scoot while he can.**



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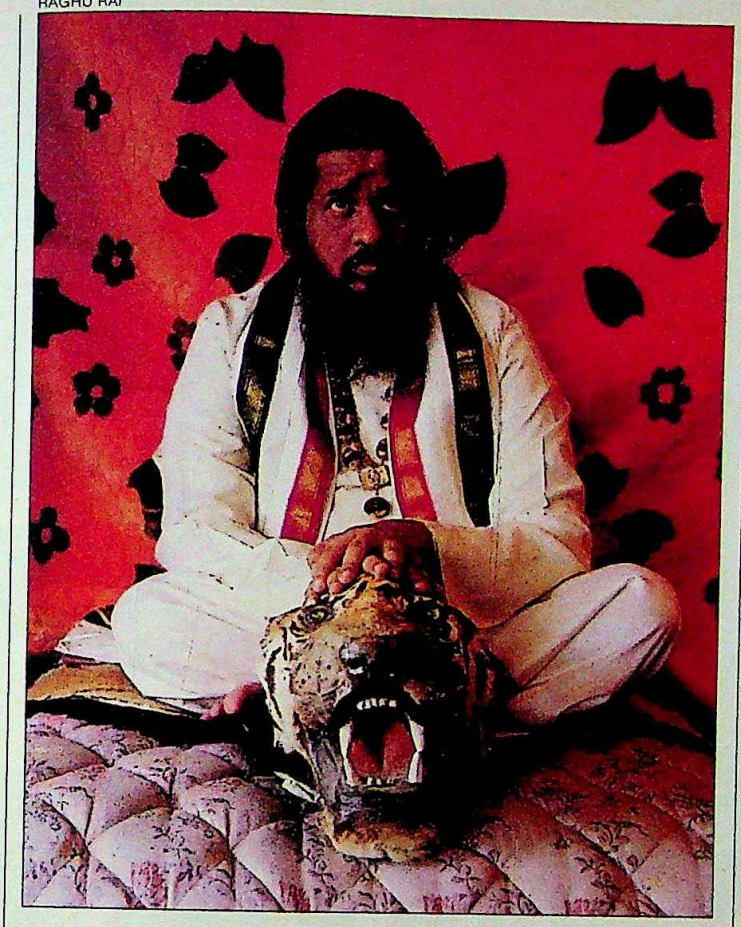
PRASHANT PANJIAR

RAGHU RAI

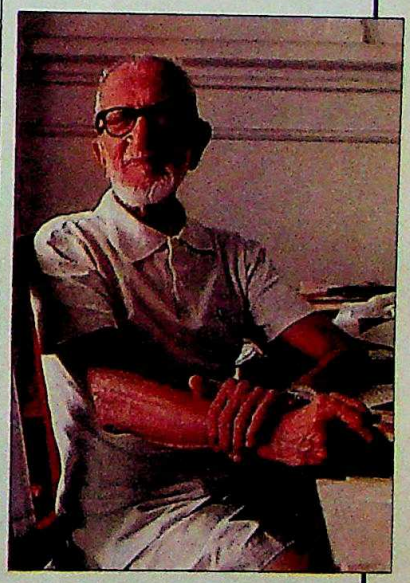


The Middle Path

■ **He was the man generally in the middle. Whether it was the sale of exclusive departmental stores or heavy duty arms. And he maintained gently persuasive means: such as money and Pamella Bordes. Nemi Chand Gandhi, alias Chandraswamy, was a godman who had everything god could wish for: unlimited wealth, celebrity status, and the friendship of the powerful—the Sultan of Brunei, Adnan Khashoggi, the King of Jordan et al. He was also known as a tantric who produced instant horoscopes. The con-man's forays into India never yielded much. Claiming to have a spiritual relationship with Indians, he meddled in the Bofors investigations, and tried to carve out a political base in India but though he picked up the influential as friends, adverse media attention put paid to most of his plans.**

A Rare Bird

■ He had the frailness of the sparrow, and the eyes of a hawk. He could identify the rarest of birds with blind ease. **Salim Ali** made Indians aware of their avian wealth. Though well in his 80s, he tramped through sanctuaries in his white dress, and sun-hat, binoculars slung at his neck, indistinguishable from his feathered friends. Through Mrs Gandhi he mobilised opinion against the shooting of rare birds, and his celebrated pursuit of the black-necked crane passed into wildlife folklore. He was even nominated to the Rajya Sabha. But as far as he was concerned politics was not for the birds. Or the bird-lovers.



lent tas

The joke goes: when
Ribeiro went to Punjab,
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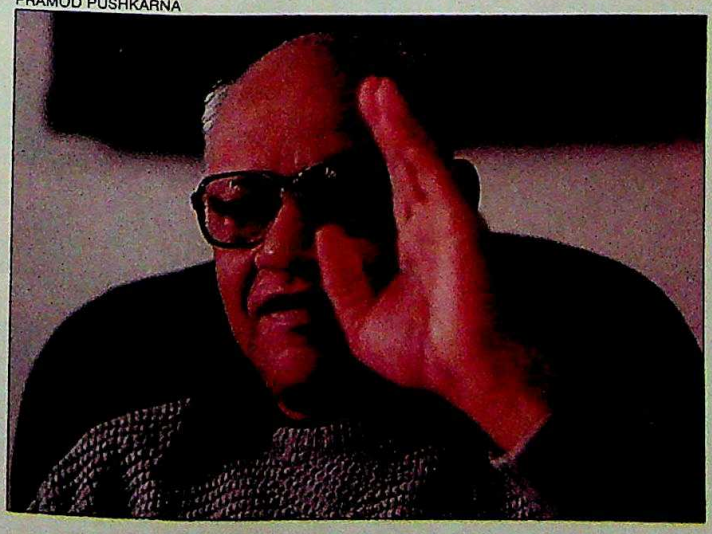
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



bullet strategy, and became the symbol of a nation's stand against terrorism. But soon his 'A' and 'B' categorisations lost meaning as violence escalated. Ribeiro moved up to become adviser to the then governor S.S. Ray, and his successor K.P.S. Gill, masterminded a successful Operation Black Thunder. Ribeiro's influence began to wane, and by the time he left he was melancholic and Punjab a ravaged, killing fields.

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WARMTH AND LAUGHTER ALL THE WAY.

The Fabric of Life

FSA-D/JS/295

SYMBOL OF QUALITY & STY

JIYAJE

JIYAJEE FABRICS

SUITING · SHIRTING · LEISUREWEA

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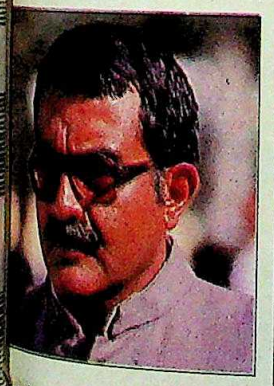
Locked in Loyalty

■ Rajiv Gandhi's school friend and closest buddy became the second most powerful man in India when Rajiv appointed him his key trouble-shooter after the 1984 elections. The former corporate executive, **Arun Singh**, slid smoothly into his new *avatar*, and was the prime minister's most dependable adviser. His laid-back style introduced a new culture in the Defence Ministry he was later shifted to. But his sudden resignation in mid-'87 shocked everyone.

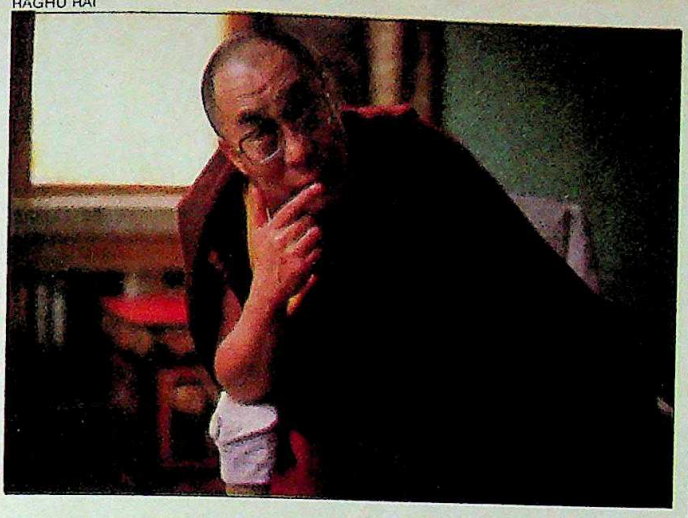
The speculation as to why he decided to quit is still the most intriguing unanswered question of the decade. Many believed it



was because of his broken marriage; he separated from his wife to settle in his no-frills hilltop retreat in Almora with a married woman, rarely leaving his hideout to venture into the world he had disowned.

Despite all attempts, Arun Singh manfully avoided giving interviews or succumbing to the intense pressure on him to speak out regarding the truth behind the Bofors controversy in which he was a key player. By speaking out, he could have undoubtedly caused Rajiv considerable political harm but the old school tie and the one-time friendship proved too much of an emotional handcuff.

RAGHU RAI

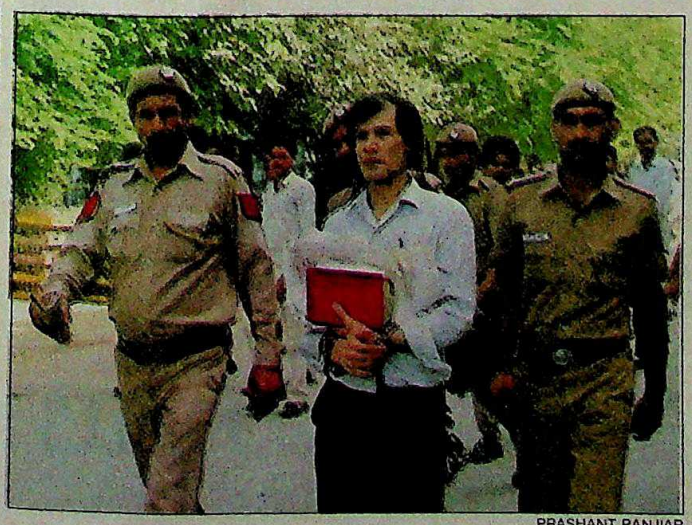


Spiritual Statesman

■ **With his twinkling eyes and delightful humour, the Dalai Lama captivated the world's imagination by his homespun philosophy and his spiritual search for universal peace and brotherhood. The honour of this year's Nobel Peace Prize is one that is richly deserved. Condemned by history—and the Chinese Government—to exist in remote exile in Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama nonetheless managed to keep the Tibetan issue alive and displayed a political skill to match his spiritual sagacity. By the end of the decade, he had become a universally respected figure, invited to speak at various prestigious international forums and on intimate terms with many of the world's leaders. His simple life-style and temporal stature also ensured him a leading role in the international crusade for human rights.**

Charismatic Criminal

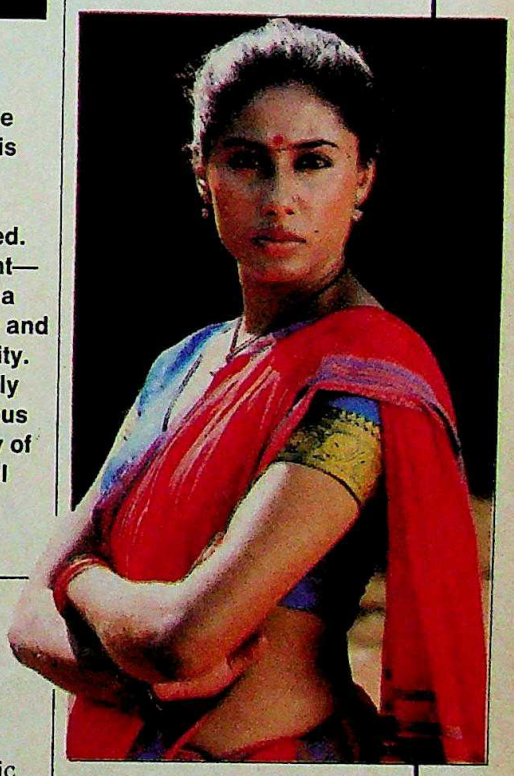
■ Though he spent most of the decade behind the high-security walls of Delhi's Tihar Jail, **Charles Sobhraj** never strayed far from the headlines, culminating in his daring, Houdini-like escape in 1986 and his anti-climactic capture a few days later in a Goa restaurant. A Charles Manson-like mass murderer, his women-and-drugs saga, which spread over a dozen countries, spawned two international best sellers and by end-decade, a possible film. A mesmeric and intelligent criminal, Sobhraj successfully beat attempts at extradition while ruling as the King of Tihar.



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Haunting Histrionics

■ Her stunning performances on the silver screen confirmed her as one of the finest actresses the country has produced. Not too beautiful by the conventional standards of cinema, **Smita Patil**'s haunting presence on the screen and her smouldering sensuality made her the icon of the New Cinema.



Winner of numerous awards, she is perhaps best-remembered for her sizzling portrayal of a defiant village belle in *Mirch Masala* and the fiery gypsy in *Bhavani Bhavai*. More than anything else, her intelligence and vitality changed the traditional dumb image of Indian heroines.

Even in real life, she charted an independent course, taking up activist causes, speaking out for the Indian woman and in the process earning herself an international reputation. She married actor Raj Babbar after a stormy relationship and her tragic death in 1986 was Indian cinema's greatest loss.

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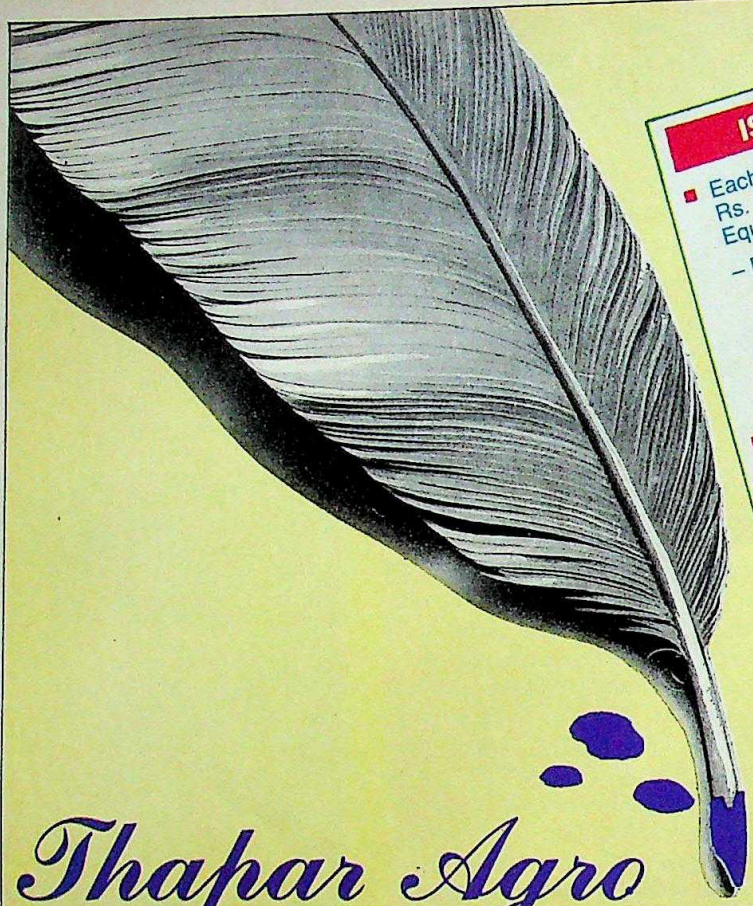

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- Each Convertible Debenture of Rs. 225 will be **fully converted** into Equity Shares as follows :
  - Rs. 112.50 into 5 Equity Shares at a premium of Rs. 12.50 per Share just 6 months after allotment.
  - Rs. 112.50 into 5 Equity Shares at a premium of Rs. 12.50 per Share 18 months after allotment.
- Interest @ 14% p.a. payable half yearly.
- Preferential allotments to U.T.I., ICICI, LIC Mutual Fund, SBI Mutual Fund and Canbank Mutual Fund, aggregating over Rs. 3.62 crores out of Public Issue.
- Listing at Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi and Ludhiana Stock Exchanges.

PUBLIC & RIGHTS ISSUE OPENS ON 22ND JANUARY, 1990

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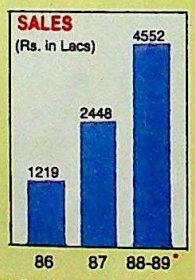
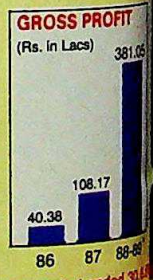
Thapar Agro's financial performance has been equally impressive and the Company has shown constant growth in sales and profits. Naturally, shareholders have been rewarded handsomely, with consistent dividends (last dividend 24% for 1988-89) and high capital appreciation.

With its well established infrastructure Thapar Agro looks to the future with confidence. It is setting up a project for the manufacture of Fatty Acids/Stearic Acids (15,000 tpa), Glycerine (450 tpa) and Soap Noodles (9,000 tpa) at Rudrapur, adjacent to its existing hard oil plant. The plant and equipment is based on the latest technology and will ensure high yield, low energy consumption and minimum down time.





* The figures are for the 18 months period ended 30.6.

To meet a part of the finance required for the project, Thapar Agro Mills Ltd. is entering the capital market with a **Public Issue of 3,21,334 14% Secured Fully Convertible Debentures of Rs. 225 each for cash at par aggregating Rs. 7,23,00,150 and 1,25,000 14% Secured Redeemable Non-Convertible Debentures of Rs. 100 each for cash at par.**

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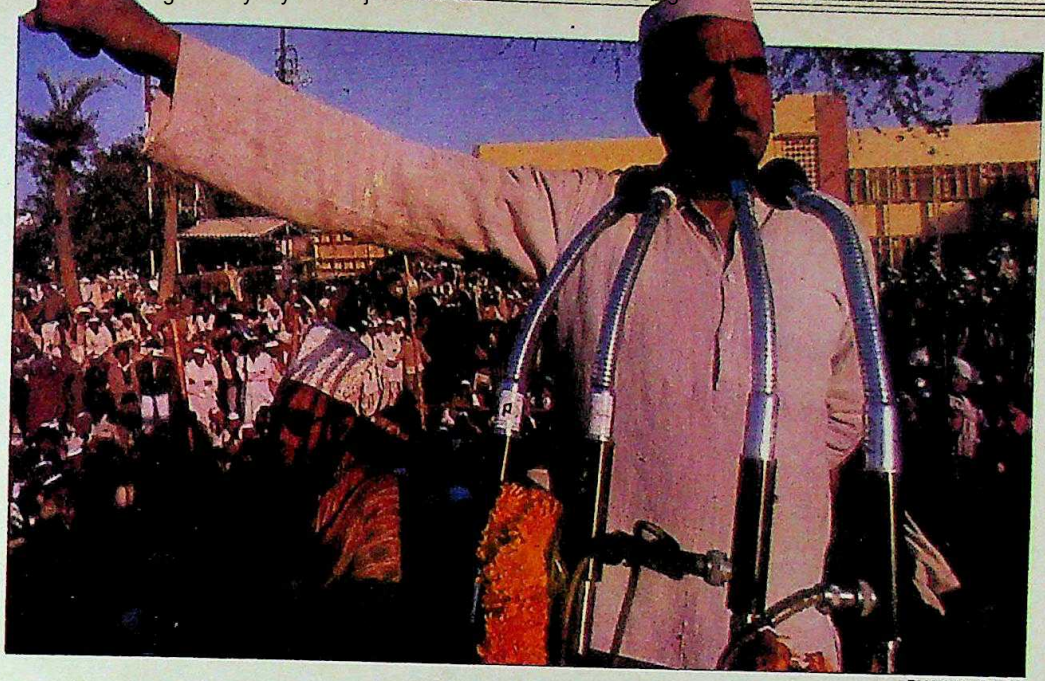
Quixotic Rustic

■ The hero of Sisauli energised the farm lobby and amused the nation with his quixotic behaviour and rustic Jat philosophy. Ordering farmers to refuse payment of their power bills, **Mahendra Singh Tikait** added a new militancy to the farmers' movement, but left the country confused about his political ambitions. He caused a sensation when he literally laid siege to Delhi and took over the Boat Club lawns in 1988, forcing the then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to shift the venue of his address. But he lost clout when his toughs pushed farm leader Sharad Joshi off the stage, provoking Joshi to comment: "You have to call a spade a spade and an idiot an idiot." Tikait ended the year on a typical note: causing a wildcat strike in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences for roughing up a senior doctor. He was forced to apologise, probably for the first time in his torrid career.



BHAWAN SINGH

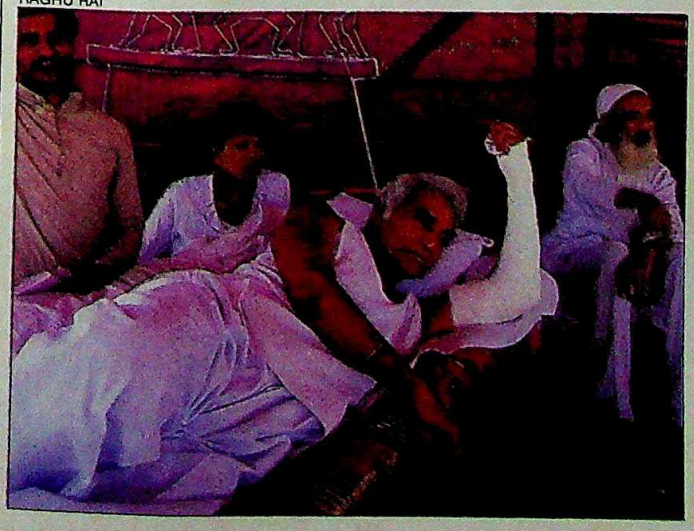
Uncle Sam's Telecom

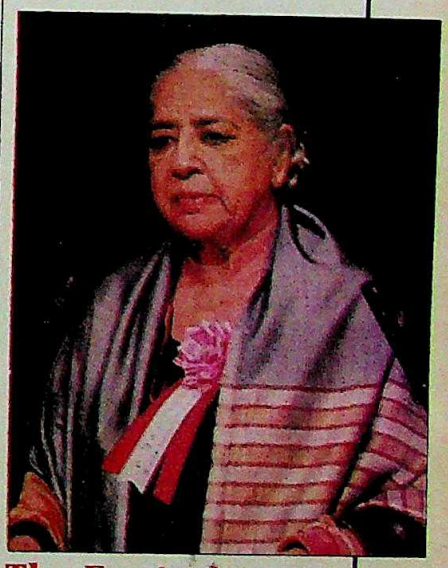
■ The fast-talking NRI got the ear of the most powerful in India, and capered on the fact that he'd given up a million dollar empire. For **Satyen 'Sam' Pitroda**, czar of Indian telecommunications, it was a fall from grace. He rolled in to meet the new Communications Minister, P. Unnikrishnan, and said: "Hi, I'm Pitroda, you must have heard of me." The icy reply: "Yes, and none of it pleasant."

Knitting Harmony

■ He liked to lead a quiet life in Anandvan in Maharashtra, looking after leprosy patients, and everybody liked him. The Filipinos even honoured him with the Magsaysay Award. But Baba Amte's crusading zeal desired to mend much else. And he embarked on a Knit India *(Bharat Jodo)* march, taking in his warp and woof even the Punjab militants. But he had no answer when the extremists asked: why hadn't he embarked on such an exercise when thousands of Sikhs were killed in Delhi? He was also involved with India's emerging Green movement—becoming the greatest obstacle damming the Narmada project's progress. He organised the tribals, co-ordinated the incompatible environmentalists (who wanted to protect forests) and social activists (who wanted to protect people), and brought together oustees from many places at Harsud. And he ended up becoming unpopular with the authorities; earning his final spurs for spine and spirit.

RAGHU RAI





The Festival Queen

■ She carved out an empire from ruins and made quite a festival of her work. Mrs Gandhi's friend, **Pupul Jayakar**, presided like a mirthless Buddha over the show-casing of India's culture. And unleashed festivals of India worldwide. But eventually the wheel of fortune turned. Cool winds blew from Rajiv's court, and decade-end saw her controversially resigning her post from the Government.

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RATHIJIT GHATAK

Dalliance with Fame

■ A wag noted recently: Vivian Richards did more for her career in 15 minutes than Shyam Benegal could do in five years. More seriously, **Neena Gupta** represented the new morality of the Indian woman. Unencumbered by what others thought, she had Viv's child. Nor was this her first dalliance.

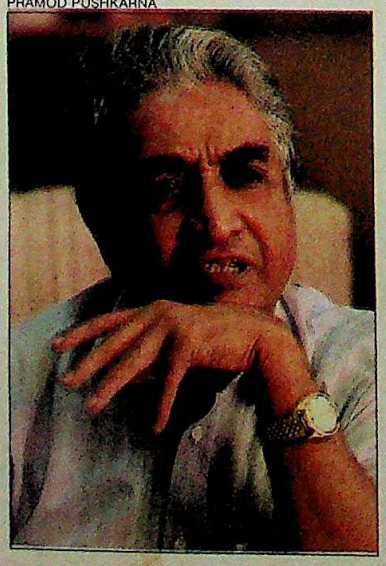
Earlier, she'd gone in for a different kind of maestro. Her relationship with Sharang Dev, the musician-son of Pandit Jasraj, had just ended when the willow-wizard came by. To media speculations she turned a deaf ear, and it was only chequebook sleuthing—Fleet Street tabloid style—that enabled the world to know it all.

But she was no casting couch starlet. Her face had familiarly adorned Doordarshan, parallel cinema—*Utsav, Trikaal*—and Shobha De's book. Yet, it was her child that catapulted her to fame—the kind she could've done very well without.

Director of Intrigue

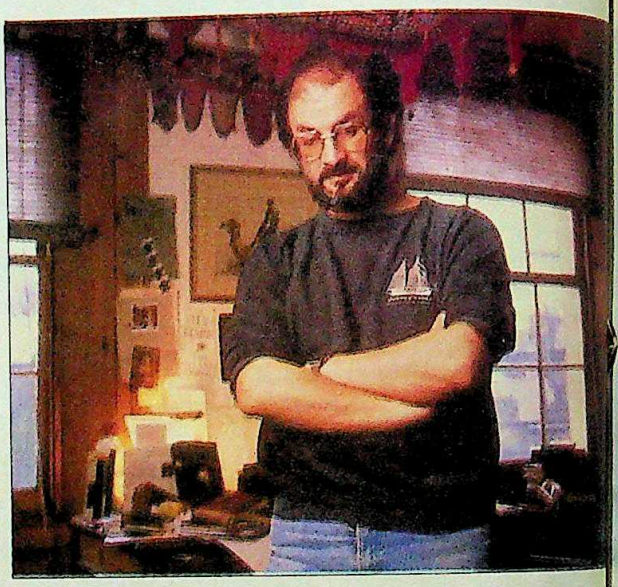
■ He didn't join the navy; he joined the CBI, and he got to see the world: Panama, Switzerland, and Sweden, to be precise. Poor **Mohan Katre**—his hands were so tied down with procedures and rules, and he went through such pains to make investigations only through proper authorities, that despite his detective acumen he was consistently out-performed by a journalist. During Katre's tenure, the CBI's image took quite a battering: for so total in the public mind was Katre's identification with the then ruling party and the Reliance Group, that the premier investigation agency came to be called the "Congress Bureau of Investigation". Letters were faked and smoke-screens thrown. The CBI chief insisted he only had a few Reliance shares. But his comeuppance had a touch of poetic justice. An amateur sleuth—Maneck Davar—infiltrated the family of the don of detection, and revealed that his son Umesh's hand was stuck fairly deep in the Reliance jam jar.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Major Feat of Rioting

■ He abhorred the conservatism of Margaret Thatcher, and defended immigrants. Eventually, the latter cried for his blood, while Maggie defended him. For **Salman Rushdie**, it was a scenario as fantastical as his best-selling books. The Indian-born writer received the death sentence of the decade, when Ayatollah Khomeini unleashed thousands of would-be assassins to execute him. His crime: *The Satanic Verses*, a book seen as defiling the Prophet. While Rushdie was the controversy's victim, the book was its gainer. Sold



in protected bookshops by salesmen wearing bullet-proof jackets, it spiralled up the best seller lists, and stayed to roost. And though the Ayatollah died soon after, the sentence lives on. Forcing the egocentric author into a hiding from which only the written word may emerge.

The Woman Hath Fury

■ Who'd have thought that a frail, old woman would spell the divorce of Rajiv Gandhi from the intelligentsia? But **Shah Bano** achieved that with elan. When her husband refused to pay the measly compensation due to her under law, she sued, only to find her errant spouse hiding behind a copy of the Koran. But the lady literally rocked the edifice of Indian justice. And when the Supreme Court ruled in her favour, a furore ensued, between progressives and obscurantists. Many Muslim politicians gained mileage, charging the Government with offending minorities. Arif Mohammad Khan put up a defence at Rajiv's behest only to discover him introducing a law that pushed Muslim women into another century. Not the 21st, but the 13th.

BHAWAN SINGH

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The times of principles

On the eve of the historic Dandi March, Mahatma Gandhi vowed he would not return to Sabarmati Ashram until India was free.

He was imprisoned, and released in 1934. India was still in bondage. Keeping his word, Gandhiji accepted the long-standing invitation of Jamnalal Bajaj and made Wardha his home. Two years later, he moved permanently to Sevagram, gifted to him by Jamnalal Bajaj.

Wardha became the "political capital" of India. The Congress Working Committee and many other organisations met there. Political leaders and visitors from across India and the world came to meet Gandhiji. The vast facility Jamnalal Bajaj created at Bajajwadi became an international guest house. A tradition which is still maintained.

C Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel; all close confidants of Gandhiji were regular guests. The British externed Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, from his province. He also came to live at Bajajwadi.

When Mahatma Gandhi had decided to launch the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Jamnalal Bajaj set up a satyagraha camp at Bombay. His wife Jankidevi helped him. Jamnalal was arrested. Kasturba Gandhi advised Jankidevi not to follow him to jail. She should take the message of freedom to the people.

Jankidevi travelled constantly, urging the people to wear khadi and break the salt laws. Eventually arrested in 1932, her health was shattered by the time of her release.

To protect the civic rights of citizens and promote responsible government in the princely states, Jamnalal Bajaj founded Praja Mandals. As president of the Jaipur State Praja Mandal, he led the 1939 Jaipur Satyagraha, the first ever in an Indian state. The civic rights of the people were restored.

The freedom struggle waged on. But Jamnalal Bajaj would not see the dawn for which he had sacrificed so much. Just fiftytwo, he passed away suddenly in 1942.

"Whenever I wrote of wealthy men becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good I had always this merchant prince principally in mind," wrote Gandhiji after Jamnalal's death.

Padma Vibhushan awarded to Jankidevi Bajaj in 1956

bajaj au

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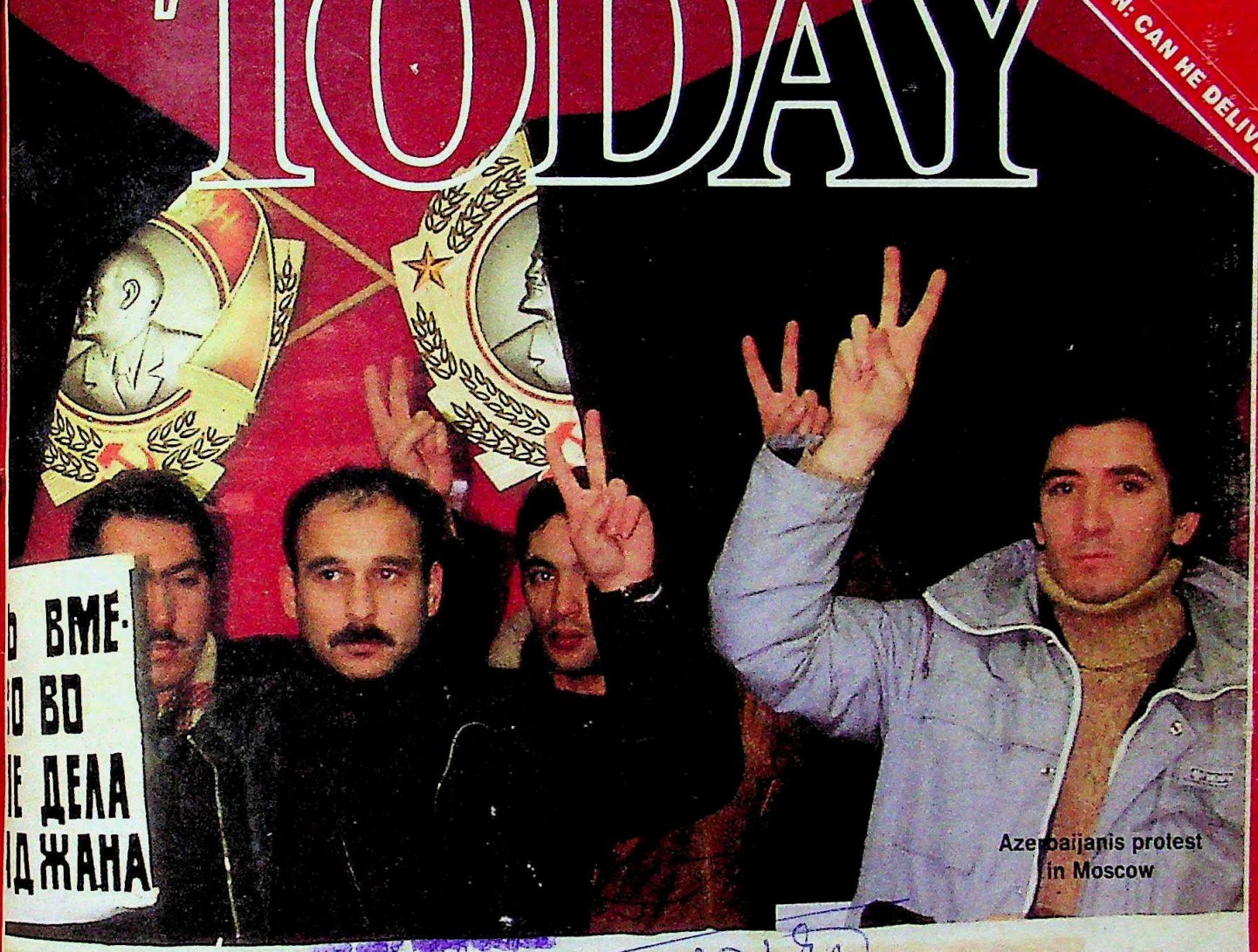
INDIA TODAY
FEBRUARY 15, 1990

TODAY

SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN: CAN HE DELIVER?

THE MAN WHO DARED TO BE GOD

RAJNEESH



Azerbaijanis protest in Moscow

ІНАМ ПОГИБШИМ
ТКАЗ СТРЕЛЯТЬ В НАРОД
ЕЧНАЯ ПАМЯТЬ

SOVIET UNION: ON THE SPOT REPORT

STATE OF TURMOIL

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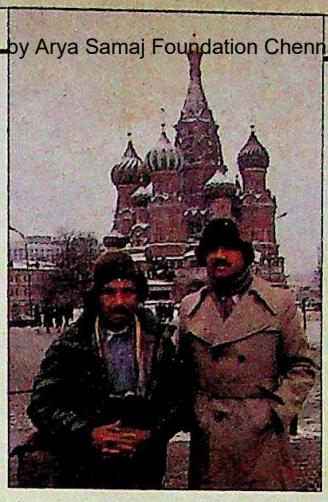
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

TRUE to its name, INDIA TODAY *by and large keeps to its brief of covering India and doing foreign stories only in so far as they relate to India or Indians. And to be sure there is always enough happening in our vast and complex country to keep us busy. Nevertheless, in recent years as India's involvement with its neighbours has increased we've expanded our coverage to all major news events in these countries. But now we find that as technology and media steadily shrink the world, the reverberations of major events in far-off lands can no longer be ignored.*

Last year, we rushed our team to Beijing when Tiananmen Square witnessed a momentous, and eventually bloody, stand-off between the might of the communist regime and the democratic aspirations of the Chinese youth. It was a moment when the world's most populous country teetered on the edge of radical change; and we found ourselves professionally bound to report it.

The recent past has seen cataclysmic upheaval in the world's communist bloc. A gale of freedom has redrawn the political maps of Eastern Europe and the USSR; the Cold War is on a high-velocity melt-down; and the world stands on the threshold of even more sweeping changes. At the hub of all this upheaval and historic action lie Moscow and Mikhail Gorbachev.



Bhawan and Shekhar in Moscow

It is to Moscow then that INDIA TODAY *sent its team of Features Editor* SHEKHAR GUPTA *and Assistant Picture Editor* BHAWAN SINGH*—the only Indian publication to do so. They discovered a country not only in ethnic turmoil, but also in the midst of great social and economic flux. They found a long-repressed people passionately savouring a new-found freedom. Says Gupta: "We couldn't have come at a better time, when the fundamental tenets of the Soviet system are being questioned. And the openness is the biggest surprise. Officials talk candidly, and secessionists distribute inflammatory literature freely."*

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Pangs of Change

The bloody ethnic riots in Azerbaijan and Armenia and the demand for independence in a host of other republics pose a dangerous threat to the unity of the Soviet Union. It is President Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms that have led to the long dormant tensions coming to the fore. An on-the-spot report.

COVER STORY 24

The Ambivalent Militant

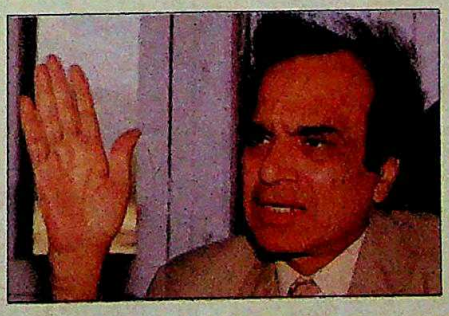
Simranjit Singh Mann has emerged as the new leader in the murky political scenario of the trouble-torn Punjab. A profile of the former IPS officer who is riven by his western liberal upbringing and his religious orthodoxy which manifest themselves in his rapidly shifting and often ambiguous positions.

SPECIAL REPORT 90

Man who Dared be God

For a generation searching for gods, Bhagwan Rajneesh was just the avatar. Worshipped and hounded, the modern sage's philosophy of free sex attracted hundreds around the world. An obituary of Rajneesh-Zorba-Osho the colourful godman who was "never born and could never die".

SPECIAL FEATURE 141



A Formidable Challenge

Jagmohan's second term as Jammu and Kashmir governor was expected to be a daunting assignment. But with the outgoing Abdullah regime launching a vicious campaign to discredit him, and with violence errupting in the valley as never before, his task is getting tougher by the day.

CURRENT EVENTS 40

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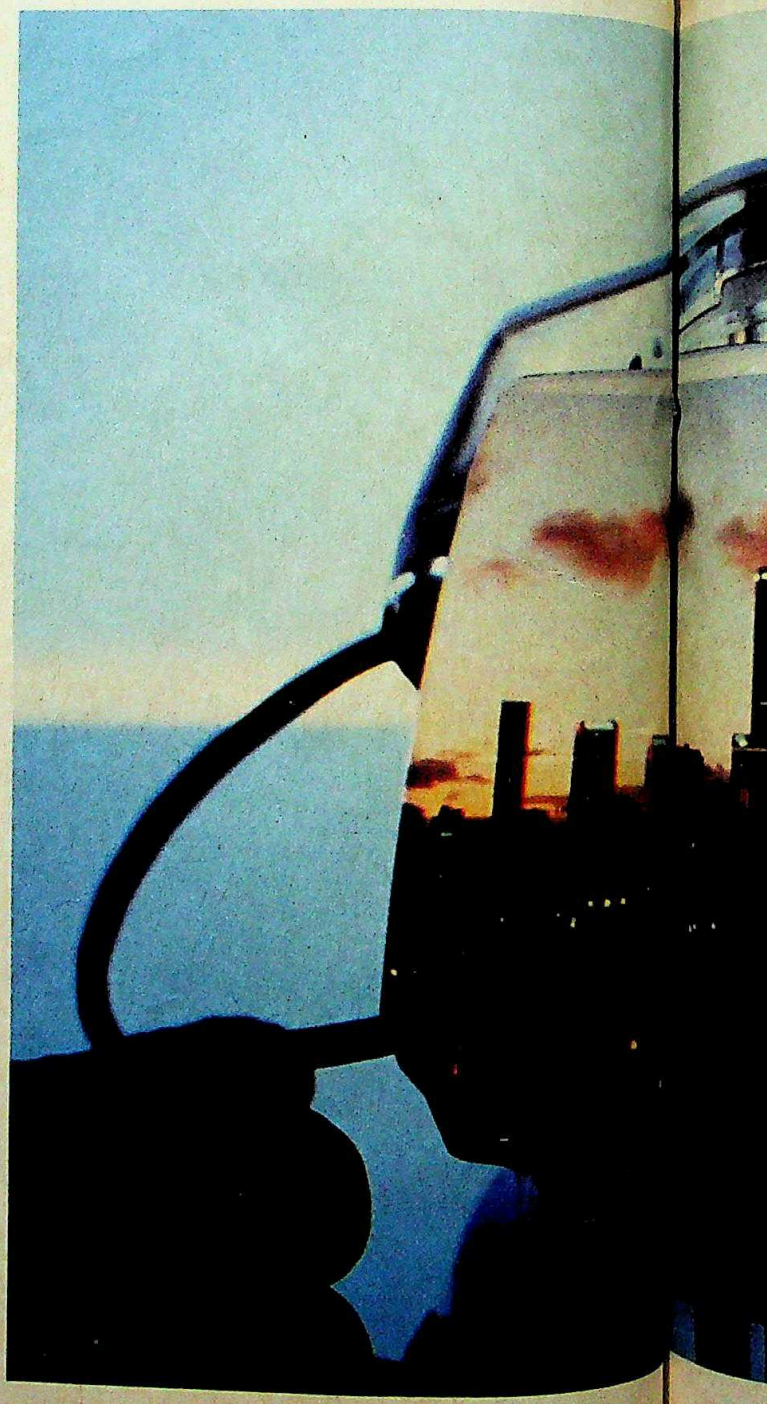

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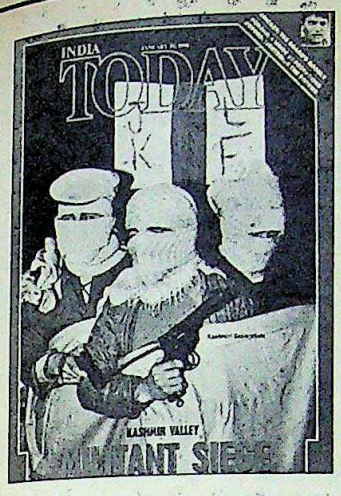

CRISIS IN KASHMIR

Militant organisations are turning Kashmir into a valley of fear ("Militant Siege", January 31). The state administration will have to become more responsive to the fast deteriorating situation by redressing the genuine grievances of the youth and isolating the anti-national elements. It is equally important for the political parties to take a joint initiative.

Kurnool — P. SIVA RAM PRASAD

■ By helping the Kashmiri militants, Pakistan apparently wants to repeat Bangladesh. But if a violent conflict becomes inevitable, India will fight with all its might to save the states of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

Pune — N.V. VISHWANATH

A STUMBLING BLOCK

In his interview ("The militants call the shots", January 15), Mufti Mohammed Sayeed says that Article 370 of the Constitution is not a hindrance to the emotional integration of Kashmir with the rest of India. But it is mainly because of this Article that the feeling that Kashmir is not a part of India has grown over the years.

New Delhi — LALIMA ANEJA DANG

AN EVENTFUL DECADE

The special issue on the '80s ("A Momentous Decade" January 15) provided a very balanced analysis of the momentous events of the past 10 years in the country. The new decade has also had ominous beginnings with the rise in communalism and terrorism. The special issue was a refresher course for the readers.

Kanpur — RAAJ GOPAL MEHROTRA

■ The special issue was a delight to read. The best was the write-up on fashion trends—a nice blend of the East and the West.

Baroda — AMIT LOIWAL

■ The special issue was just fascinating—a collector's item.

Agra — VISHAL GARG

■ The articles on politics, television and sports made interesting reading. And the one on consumerism was a real eye-opener.

Calcutta — VIVEK AGARWAL

■ Congratulations for bringing out a special issue on the '80s. The chart on deficit, inflation and debt trap was a masterpiece.

Bombay — P.R. MANNADIAR

■ The coverage given to the important events relating to politics, economy, consumerism, cinema, environment and others was comprehensive and fair.

Haryana — Y.P. DHIR

■ The special issue reflects your tradition of high value journalism.

Pune — C.B. BIWALKAR

■ You have done a remarkable job of condensing happenings of 3,650 days into a single issue.

Hyderabad — SHAILESH KUBER

■ The special issue was very attractive. It covered the major events in all walks of life.

Singrauli — MUYYAM RAJAN

■ The special issue provided interesting reading, though I expected it to be bulkier. Keeping out write-ups on international events was a wise decision.

Bombay — DAYANAND KANCHAN

■ INDIA TODAY has once again taken the cake by presenting the '80s in a unique, inimitable style. A collector's item for sure.

Bangalore — K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

■ The special issue was simply superb.

Banavara — K.T. BHASKAR

■ A neat compendium of historical notes on the past decade, the special issue made excellent reading.

New Delhi — R. RAGHAVAN

■ The special issue on the last 10 years not only helped to recollect the past but also made one feel a decade younger.

Gujarat — J.V. SUDARSHAN

A SHINING STAR

The selection of Kamalahasan ("Triumph, Trauma and Tears", January 15) as the actor of the decade was absolutely in order.

Kolhapur — ARVIND GATARE

■ The story on cinema of the past decade touched most aspects of its progress. One of the most striking features of cinema was undoubtedly the emergence of Kamalahasan as a complete actor. After he won the national best actor award for *Munram Pirai*, he has never looked back. He also has the unique distinction of winning best actor awards in three languages.

Madras — C.K. SUBRAMANIAM

POLICY PERILS

The reservation policy of the Government has only served to produce incompetent individuals in various fields of professional activity ("Spreading Tentacles", January 15). It would have been better if those benefiting from this policy had been given financial assistance and left to compete and excel in a field of their choice.

Raipur — MAJOR RAJIV KUMAR

■ The present reservation policy has led to inefficiency and the caste label has become the primary qualification to enter government service. Even the well-to-do manage to get good jobs easily on grounds of being Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

West Bengal — MANOJ JAIN

A GOOD BEGINNING

The cover story, "A Promising Start" (December 31) was a bio-data of the whole new cabinet. All the members of this Government inspire hope and confidence in the people. The new Government has already taken steps to solve the

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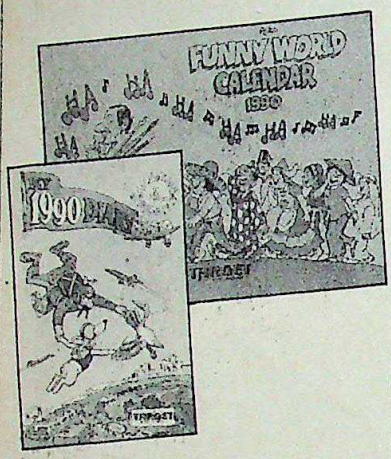
A year full of fun for your kids



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Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir problems. There is much to look forward to.
Chandigarh — S.S. MANDER

■ Prime Minister V.P. Singh has been able to transform his public image of a wishy-washy leader to that of a man of action. But he has gone too far in refusing to wear a bullet-proof jacket. Even if he is not on anybody's hitlist, he must remember that the prime minister of India is always a target for uncouth elements.
Madras — V.N. NARAYANASWAMY

■ The National Front Government has indeed made a promising start. V.P. Singh's gesture seeking co-operation of all parties to solve the Punjab problem was heartening. But time alone can tell how far the Government will be successful in solving these burning issues.
Bhubaneswar — D.J. PATRO

SINCERE ATTEMPT

Prime Minister V.P. Singh's visit to Punjab has helped in conveying the Centre's sincerity to solve the seven-year-old problem ("Flicker of Hope", December 31). But bringing back peace to the state will take a very long time. And Singh will have to keep at bay those who have a vested interest in sabotaging peace initiatives.
Madras — SASHI NAIR

■ It would not be wrong to say that the conductor (General Zia-ul-Haq) may have died but his orchestra plays on. However, it is for Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to make her countrymen realise that the choice vis-a-vis the relations with India is between co-existence and no-existence. So, sooner she disbands this orchestra the better it is.
Amritsar — K.J.S. AHLUWALIA

■ The killing of a senior police officer, Gobind Ram, along with three others by the terrorists on the eve of the Ludhiana rally once again brought into sharp focus the reality that any step taken for the settlement of the Punjab problem would be resisted. But the new Government should continue to make sincere efforts to solve the tangle.
Meerut Cantt. — SHASHANK SHEKHAR

■ Mrs Gandhi's government preferred to stay aloof when another senior officer A.S. Atwal was murdered at the gates of the Golden Temple. She waited for the opportunity to use the situation to her advantage. Rajiv Gandhi too had the people's goodwill, but he wasted his time politicking and outmanoeuvring the Akalis. Now it is for V.P. Singh to show that he does not forget his government's priorities.
Agra — ANIL KUMAR DIKSHIT

INTIMIDATION TACTICS

The abduction of Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's daughter Rubaiya ("Abduction Anguish", December 31) has brought to the forefront the inefficiency of our political and administrative processes. The terrorists have found a new modus operandi to intimidate the Government.
Bihar — ASEEM K. JHA

■ It is worrying that the militants are gaining support in Kashmir. With the change of government at the Centre, it is hoped that effective measures will be taken to curb this anti-national movement.
Uttar Pradesh — MOHAMMED AMIR ALVI

A WELCOME CHANGE

"The Powers that Were" (December 31) suggests that Rajiv Gandhi's ministerial colleagues are happier after their defeat. Suddenly, they seem to have achieved spiritual and domestic bliss.
Brunei — V.P. RAJOURIA

UNFAIR ASSESSMENT

The review of Valmik Thapar's book *Tigers: The Secret Life* ("A Trail of Discovery", December 31) was upsetting. You have noted that some of Fateh Singh Rathore's photographs lack technical excellence. But you have yourself published the rarest pictures in the book which show the new born cubs hidden in a thick grove. Wonder if you preferred to see them in bonnets, tucked cosily in a crib lined with satin and lace.
Bombay — SOONOO TARAPOREWALA

A VERITABLE DELICACY

The interesting write-up on the turbulent transition, the nice blend of interviews, photographs and the spicy election-notes made the December 15 issue a veritable delicacy.
Raipur — SHAILESH TIWARI

DEAD ON THE MARK

The accuracy of your poll forecasts ("A Vote for Change", November 30) took the excitement out of the elections. Congratulations anyway.
Bhagalpur — KAJAL GHOSH

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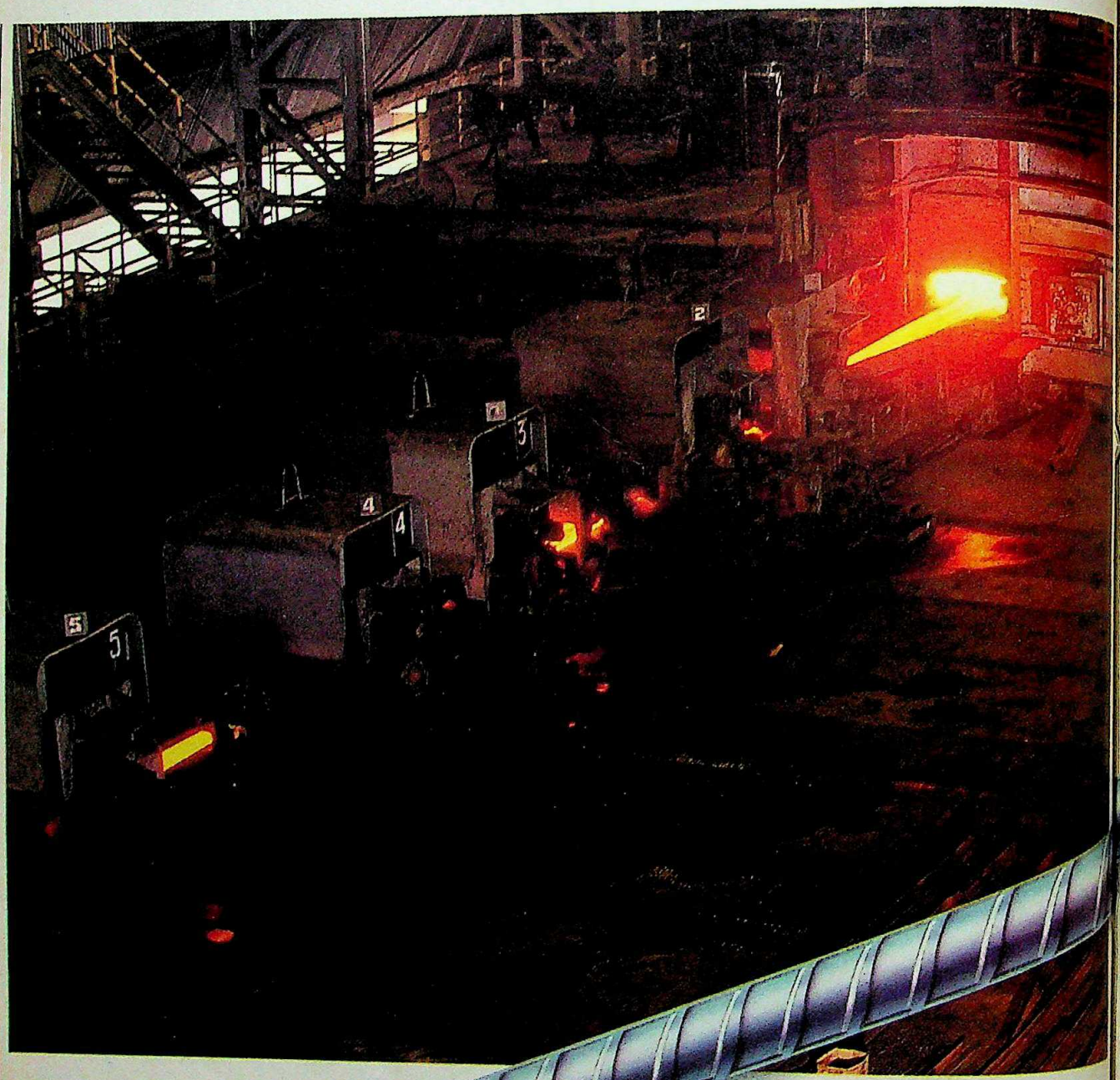

January 1989. The first lot of TISCON TMT bars are rolled at the new 300,000 tpa Bar & Rod Mill of Tata Steel. And once again Tata Steel creates history by introducing India's first thermo-mechanically treated re-inforcing bars.

TISCON TMT is yet another example of Tata Steel's ability to overcome all limitations on the path towards progress.

TISCON and the revolution of the 70s

In the seventies, Tata Steel introduced TISCON, a product of cold twisting technology that helped the construction industry to solve the old 'strength-ductility' problem inherent in the mild steel plain bars.

In TISCON the carbon content was restricted to a minimum level to impart acceptable values of ductility, bendability and weldability, and the bar strength was also dramatically increased.

In many major national projects and in innumerable construction sites, TISCON proved its quality and the quality of Tata Steel technology.

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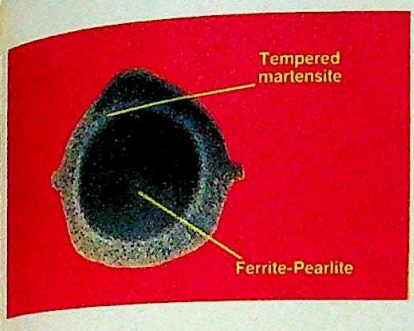

TISCON TMT—The new generation rebar

Today, in step with changing time and technology, Tata Steel announces the beginning of a stronger foothold. Produced by the world's most advanced technology—the 'Tempcore Process'—introduced in India for the first time by Tata Steel under licence from Centre de Recherches Metallurgiques (CRM), Belgium, TISCON TMT offers a unique package of benefits.

The 'Tempcore Process' involves three stages of heat treatment that gives the bar a unique grain structure. It consists of a tough outer layer of tempered martensite and a ductile core of ferrite-pearlite ensuring an excellent combination of strength and ductility.

Better bending and rebending

The tough outer surface and ductile core of TISCON TMT result in a rebar with excellent values of bendability. The bar can be bent and rebent around very small mandrels, offering obvious advantages at construction sites.

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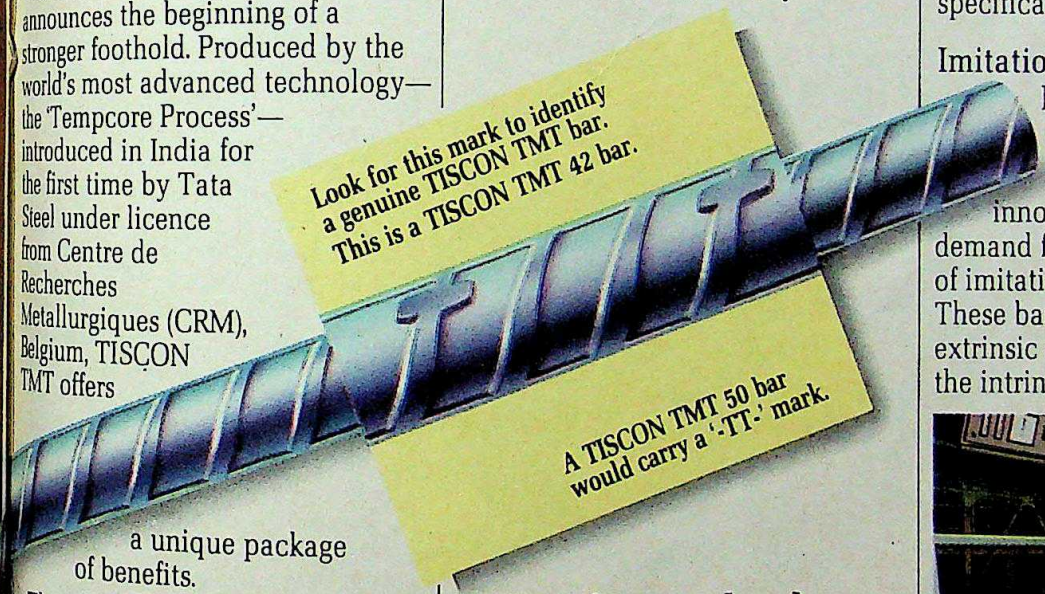
Owing to its low carbon content and low carbon equivalent, TISCON TMT has a weldability which is superior to conventional cold twisted bars. It can be butt-welded or lap-welded using ordinary rutile coated electrodes of matching strength. In manual arc welding no pre-warming or post-heat treatment is necessary.



India's first and only Thermo-Mechanically Treated reinforcing bars based on TEMPCORE technology.

TISCON TMT

Improved corrosion-resistant characteristics

TISCON TMT has no torsional stresses and therefore offers superior corrosion-resistant characteristics compared with conventional cold twisted bars.

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TISCON TMT bars are certified to IS:1786 dimensional tolerances. However, Tata Steel can supply even closer tolerances than the specification, wherever necessary.

Imitations and Limitations and the Genuine TMT

To take advantage of this innovation and the growing demand for it, the market is full of imitations of the genuine TMT. These bars can at best match the extrinsic appearance and never the intrinsic quality. Because only

Tata Steel has the ability to overcome all limitations and stay ahead of all imitations. Because only Tata Steel has the access to the TEMPCORE knowhow. To make sure that you get genuine TMT every time, Tata Steel has put a special 'TT' mark on every TISCON TMT 42 bar and a '-TT-' mark on every TISCON TMT 50 bar.

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For Change's Sake

THERE is no gainsaying that a new government must be allowed to choose its own agenda, establish its style of functioning and make known its credentials in the shortest possible period of time. That is its mandate. But there is also the danger that a new regime, eager to establish its identity in a hurry, can wind up making knee-jerk decisions. The need to break with the past is perceived as so urgent that the new policy makers often find themselves in the midst of a political hustle scoring rapid-fire points over the not so *ancien regime* in order to show that they're different, rather than making carefully thought-out, well-deliberated administrative decisions aimed at demonstrating that they're down to serious business.

None can doubt that the National Front Government has seriously settled down to business. There are major differences in its functioning, its 'atmosphere', from the Rajiv Gandhi government, whether the issues are Punjab, Kashmir or the all important question of accessibility and sharing of information with the public. So far it has proved to be a far more liberal government, more consensus-oriented, less faddist, and less paranoiac, notwithstanding the continuing dangers from both terrorist violence and communalism.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

But where the National Front Government often appears to veer unnecessarily off course, is in its overreaction to the Rajiv Gandhi government and its seeming haste in trying to undo everything that the past regime did. Undoubtedly, the party that earlier sat in raucous and overbearing splendour in the treasury benches did much that needs undoing. But even then, change must be pursued with a degree of caution.

If changes are made not out of solid, well-reasoned compulsions, but emanate, instead, from the premise that whatever-Rajiv Gandhi-did-was-wrong-and-therefore-if-we-do-the-opposite-we-must-be-right, the V.P. Singh Government will not only strengthen the belief among ordinary people that the only agenda before it is a negative one, an anti-Rajiv politico-administrative orgy, but also lose credibility on other fronts as well.

There are enough signs to indicate caution. Already, some of the steps and announcements of the new regime smack suspiciously of an attitude that it has no agenda of its own but is simply doing the opposite of what the previous government did. Proving a contrary point, as it were. Take for example the age limit for civil services. The Janata Party in 1977 had raised it to 28 years. When the Congress(I) came back to power, the age was again reduced to 26. Now, the Government has decided to raise the age limit to 28 once again, just as the Janata government had done once. Furthermore, it is also believed to be considering exceeding it by raising the limit to perhaps 30. It's like getting their own back again. And the public is confused.

Whether one agrees or not, the Congress(I) did put forth sound reasoning such as acquisition of experience, infusion of young blood and pension eligibility at retirement for reducing the age limit. It was not a whimsical act. The National Front's attempt to reject this without an adequate public debate can hardly be seen as healthy for the civil services. And the point to be noted is that not every decision made by the Congress(I) when it was in power was necessarily thoughtless, or out of sync with the national interest.

SIMILARLY, the dismissal of governors. Seeking en masse resignations is hardly the way to display a discerning hand. Could not the removals have been more selective? Could they not have been effected with due care, with the reasons for each change clearly spelled out for public consumption? For rationale and logic must not only infuse such decisions, but also be seen as doing so. Another set of dismissals which could have been handled with greater finesse was that of the election commissioners, S.S. Dhanoa and V.S. Seigell. No matter how arbitrary their appointments had been, no matter if the National Front deemed their roles as partisan, it was important that occupants of a quasi-judicial body such as the Election Commission should have been removed in a manner above canard and suspicion. If the Government distrusted their motives and their past actions, it should have produced a charge-sheet, instituted an inquiry, spelled out their aberrations, before moving in for the kill. The advantages of well-reasoned action are many. For contrary to the assertions of sceptics, the people appreciate reason, even as they are wary of high-handed conduct.

These are but a few examples. But along with others they do create a profile of a government that sometimes tends to do things not because there are logical and administrative imperatives but just to get even with its predecessors. Not everything the Rajiv government did was contrary to public interest. Whether it was the five-day week, the clearing of the Pepsi project, the advent and sway of Sam Pitroda, the detention of certain antisocial elements, appointment of important envoys, the Tehri and Narmada dam projects—the new Government has already shaken up or is contemplating shake-ups in all these areas—previous decisions were not necessarily arbitrary.

If the nation's new rulers choose to jettison these decisions, and they have the right to, they must do so with caution and deliberation and for unassailable reasons. After all, nothing is ever served by throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

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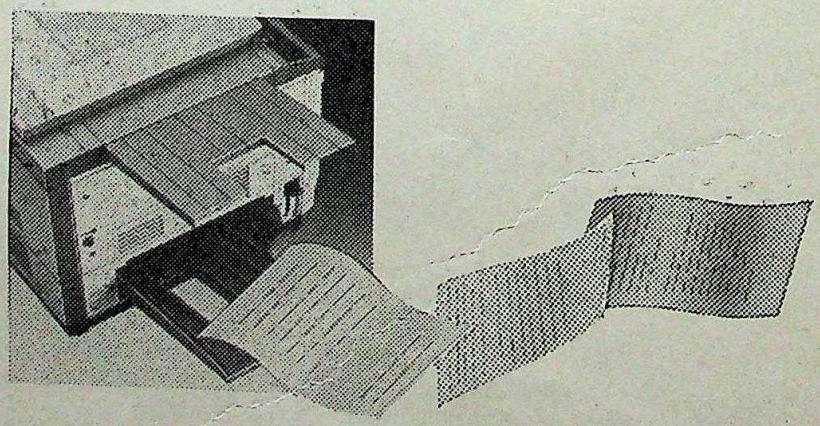

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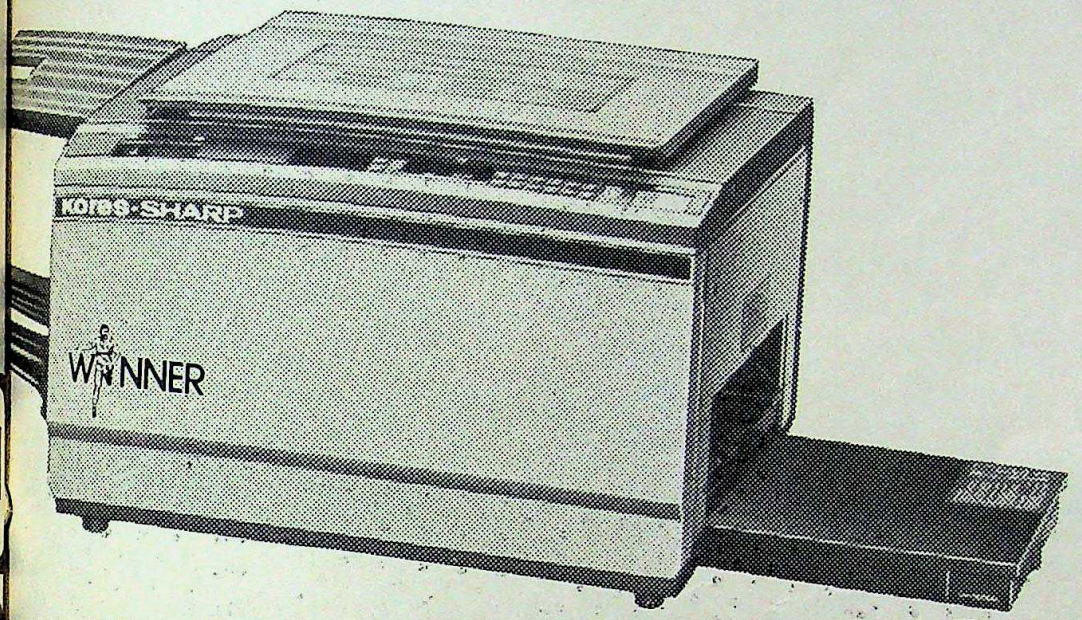

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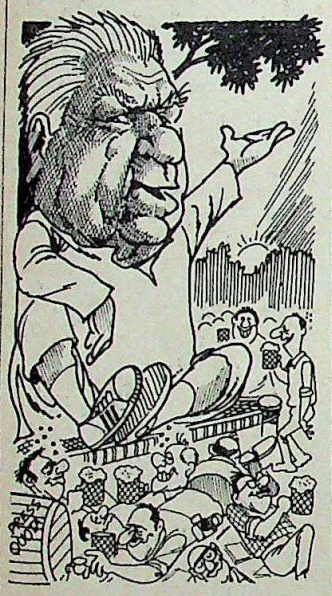
Tau's Treat

● Who would ever have imagined Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, the quick-tongued and abrasive Haryana Jat, capable of PR to match the slickness of a well-heeled capital lobbyist? Of late, journalists had been criticising his wild utterances on just about every conceivable subject un-



der the sun. But instead of his usual hamhandedness towards unfriendly scribes, the *tau* (elder uncle as he likes to be called) adopted a surprising new approach.

He packed some 50 reporters into two Swaraj Mazda vans and took off with them for the picturesque Surajkund tourist resort in nearby Faridabad where, sitting under a tree, he held forth—as agriculture minister—on the intricacies of rural policies. Who cared whether the reporters listened or not. The point was they were having a ball sunning themselves and imbibing generously of the beer and vodka and gin that came as part of the deal. The last to be a party-pooper, Lal, sensing the spirited contentment of his flock, decided that serious matters concerning the state and the party could be discussed later and retired to his suite leaving the scribes with the spirits while Haryana's official machinery kept guard. And all was jollity. Later, a pleased Devi Lal noted: *"Pehle Haryana ka tau ab sare desh ka tau."* (Haryana's uncle is now the nation's uncle).

Fez Fuss

● Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's sartorial leitmotif—the fur cap that is almost a fez—has become the subject of endless controversy.

First, it came to the notice of wildlife enthusiasts who've been writing endless letters condemning the raja for adorning his pate with the fur of illegally trapped animals. Then, there are those who call it a Jinnah topi—a head-dress of the Pakistani aristocracy—and accuse the Janata Dal leader of sporting it as a symbolic gesture to elicit sympathetic vibes from Indian Muslims who voted for his party in their droves. Still, others maintain the cap is a good-luck charm from a Delhi-based existentialist poet who was Singh's spiritual mentor.

But Singh shrugs off all the criticism and speculation. First, he says, it's not fur but synthetic. Why does he wear

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

it? In his own words: "The natural stuff on my head is getting a bit thin so I have to supplement it with something artificial to keep warm." Many hope that wearing the good-luck charm will help him solve all manner of hair-raising problems.

The Raw Truth

● As one intelligence agency after another bit the dust following the change in government, one super-sleuth—Anand Verma—the chief of the Research and Analysis Service (RAS, formerly known as RAW) seemed to be leading a charmed life, unscathed within his office.

Bureaucratic circles were surprised at his continuance particularly in view of Verma's closeness to Rajiv Gandhi to whom he had special access. Also, the RAS boss from the Madhya Pradesh IPS cadre, is known to be in the bad books of Janata Dal leader V.C. Shukla who was once his chief patron. They fell out after the Emergency.

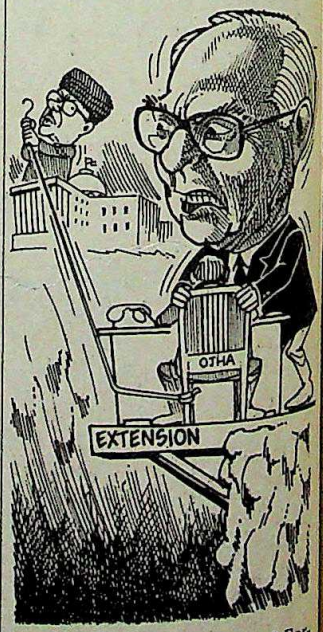
RAS is also on the new Government's most-in-need-of-reform list in view of the agency having become bloated and top-heavy with more than 50 joint secretaries at its command. But government sources say that Verma is being kept on not because Prime Minister V.P. Singh has any particular liking for him but because he wants to hold the service accountable for major intelligence lapses in Sri-Lanka and the North-east as well as the department's involvement in the dirty tricks campaign mounted by Rajiv's government against its opponents. Verma will be held to his hot seat to ensure that he provides the new Government the details and files relating to several critical investigations now under way. After that, he will be retired.

Daily-wager Chief

● All has not been smooth sailing between Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh and Punjab's new Governor Nirmal Mukarji.

After Siddhartha Shankar Ray's removal, the next in line for the axe was Ray's blue-eyed boy, Chief Secretary R.P. Ojha who had been given an unprecedented one-year extension that was due to expire in December. Mukarji recommended that Ojha be given yet another year's extension. The Prime Minister's Office balked—first, because the removal of Ojha was consistent with its new initiatives in trouble-torn Punjab, and second, because the Government has stated, that it will not grant extensions to retiring bureaucrats. Mukarji's request was turned down.

But Mukarji was furious



and turned to his friend Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral. Under a new arrangement Ojha has received an extension until March and has also earned for himself the dubious title among his IAS colleagues of "the daily-wager chief secretary".

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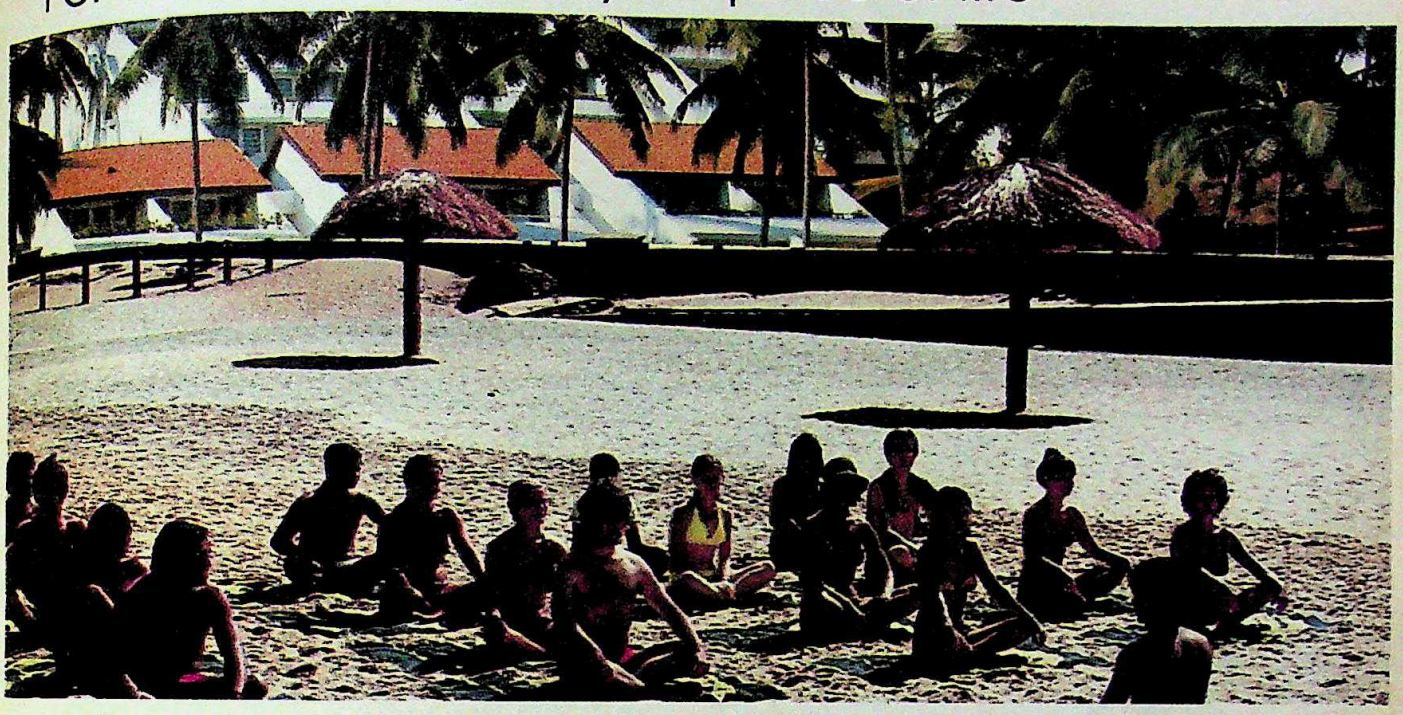

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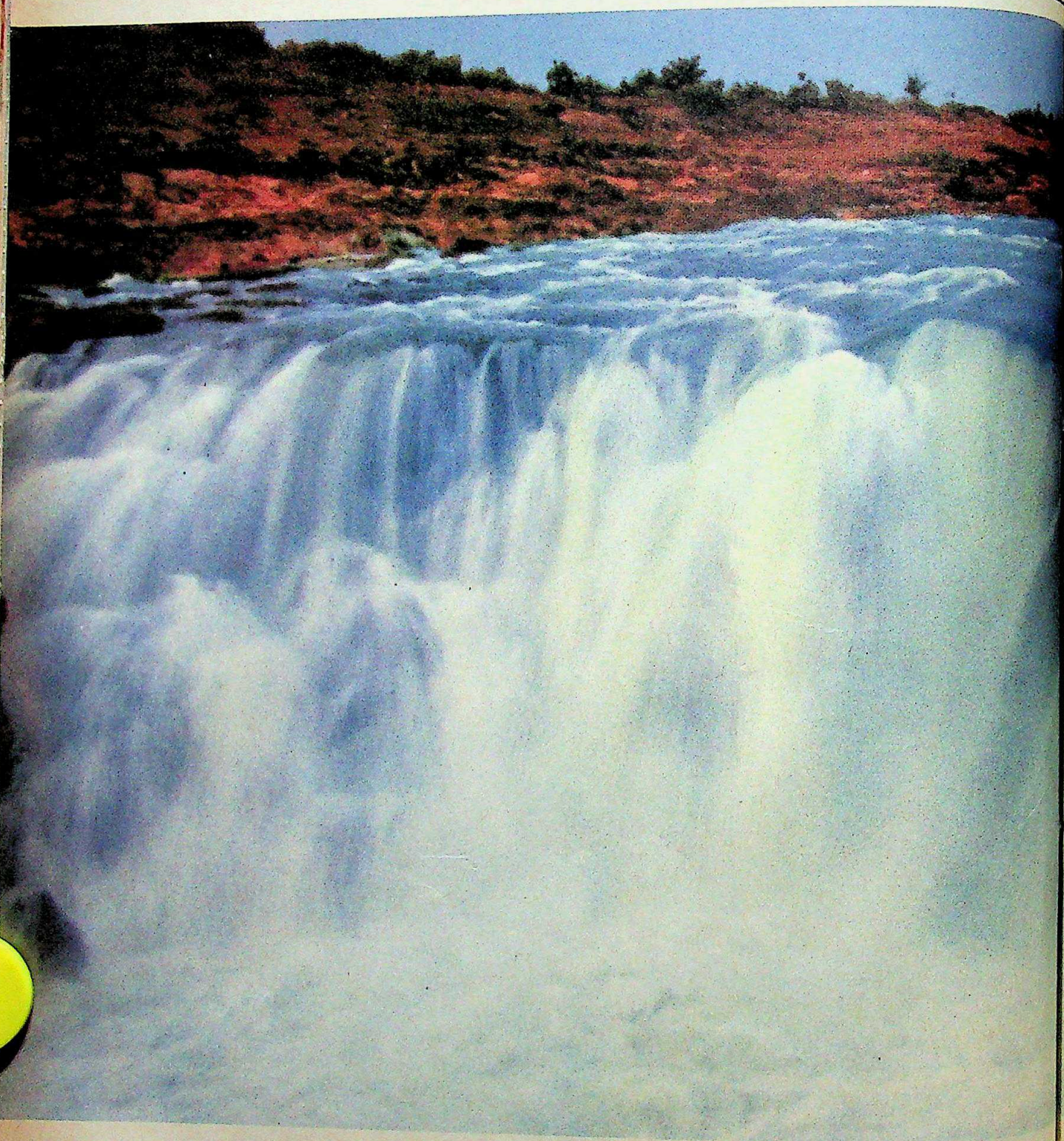

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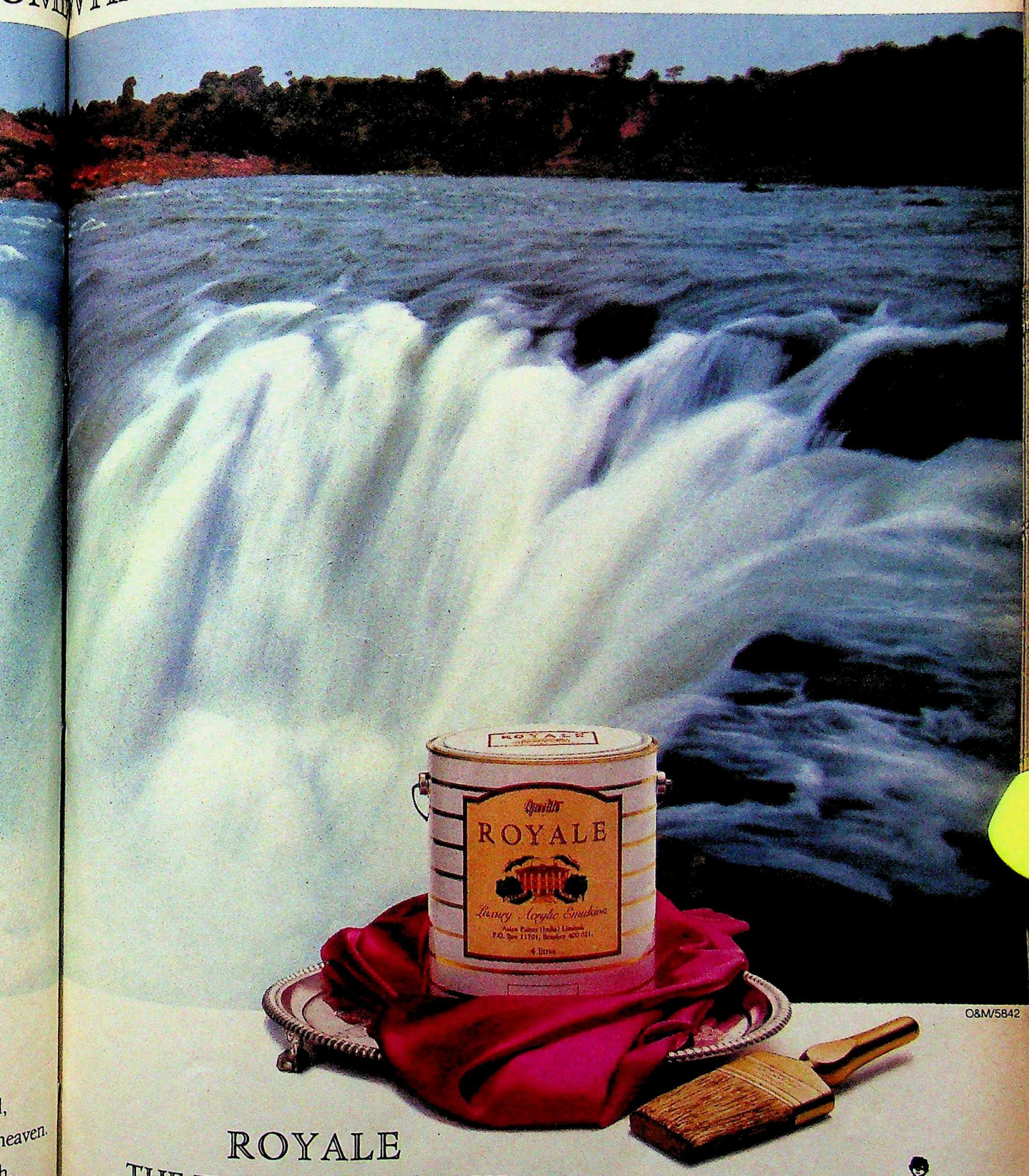

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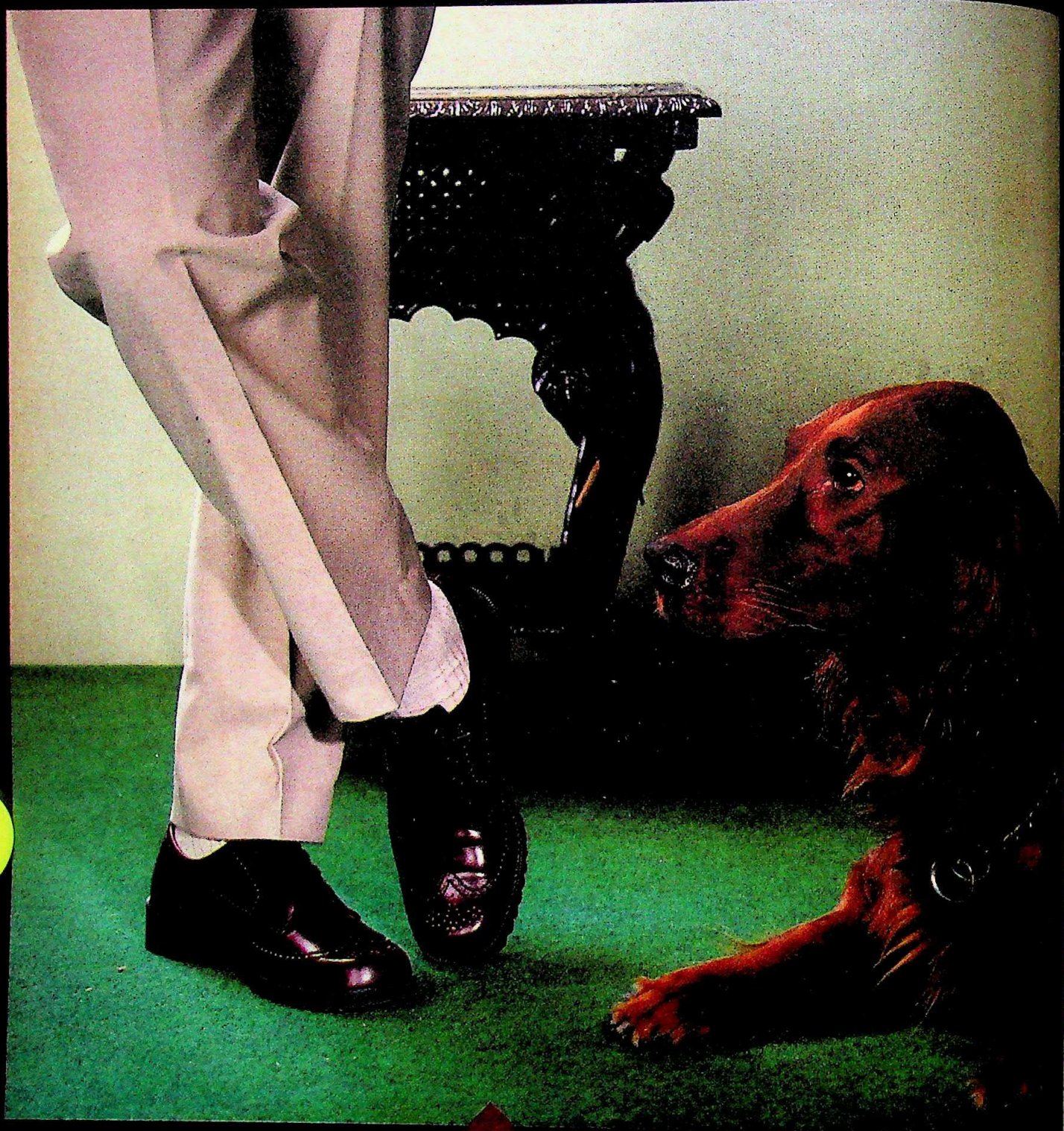

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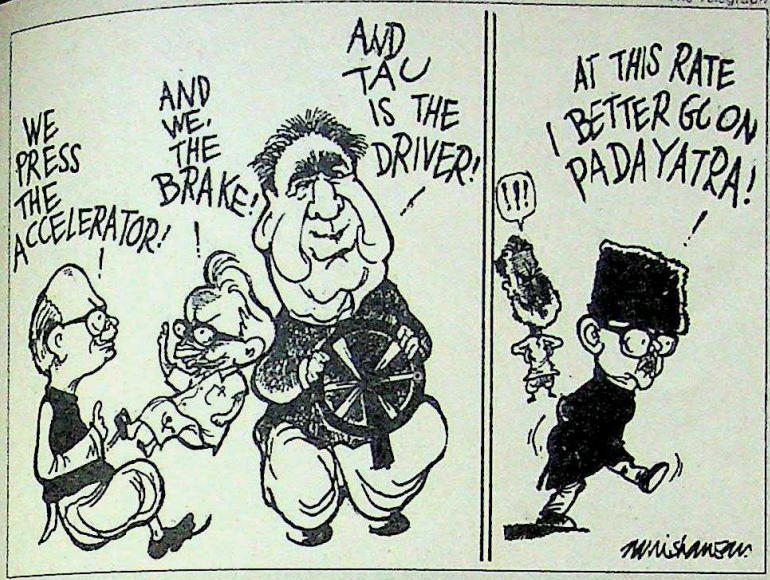

• *When Punjab bleeds, the sea at Kanyakumari weeps and the snows of the Himalayas melt as if they too were crying.*

■ V.P. SINGH at the Ludhiana rally

• *It is evident to us that the dissatisfaction of the Kashmir people and the perpetual denial of their right of self-determination is expressing itself in explicit terms.* ■ A Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson on the disturbances in Kashmir

• *It (the Pakistani spokesperson's statement) is wanton, unwarranted and unacceptable interference in our internal affairs. The people of Jammu and Kashmir, as indeed the people of the rest of India, have on several occasions exercised their political rights through free and fair elections.*

■ An Indian Foreign Office spokesperson in New Delhi

• *He (Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Shastri) is fondly making himself the political stick of the National Front Government to beat Congress(I) governments in states.* ■ JAGANNATH MISHRA, Bihar chief minister

• *Human life in India is not so cheap that the worst industrial disaster of the world which has affected the lives and health of lakhs of people could be compensated by an amount of $ 470 million.*

■ DINESH GOSWAMI, Union law and justice minister

• *Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal is just a minister like other members of the council of ministers and describing him as deputy prime minister does not confer on him any powers of the prime minister.*

■ SOLI SORABJEE, attorney-general of India, in the Supreme Court

• *Give us money and we will develop an inter-continental ballistic missile.*

■ A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM, director, Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Hyderabad

• *You journalists call V.P. Singh otherworldly and indecisive. I think you are wrong. He is India's shrewdest politician.*

■ AMITABH BACHCHAN in *Sunday*

• *If they (the cricket control board) can't sell cricket in this country, they will not be able to sell anything. And if they can't, we will.*

■ SUNIL GAVASKAR in *Sportsworld*

• *Affairs take place among film folk because we have to hug, kiss and look into each other's eyes.*

■ AAMIR KHAN in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

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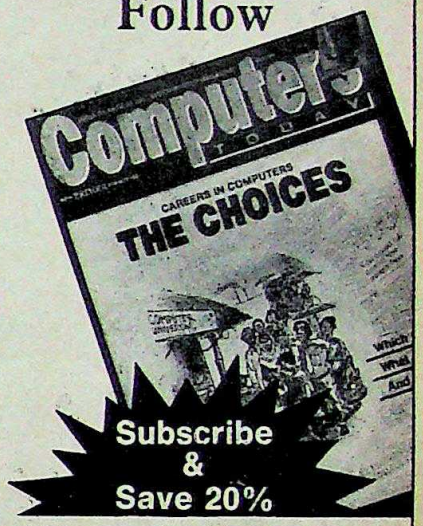

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Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

RAIL ROMANCE

■ A rather heated affair created an explosive situation at the New Delhi railway station recently. A conscientious citizen called the police and raised an alarm about a bomb on board the Shatabdi Express to Kanpur.

The railway authorities were virtually stopped dead in their tracks. They quickly got their act together and the train was stopped midway for a thorough check—only to draw a complete blank.

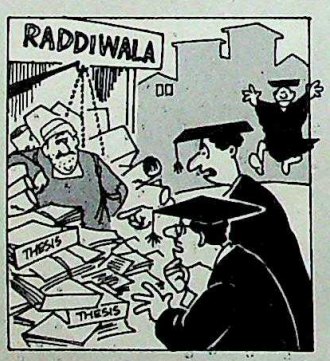
Realising they had been taken for a ride, they grilled the over-zealous informer to discover that his name figured on the reservation list. It was then that the pieces fell together. The informer was a lovelorn suitor who, being unable to board the train carrying his beau, came up with the ingenious idea of raising a bomb hoax. This gave him time to take another train to catch up with the one he had missed. The unamused police got their own back by arresting him, derailing momentarily his plans of the romantic reunion.

MONKEY TRICKS

■ Ganesan, as his name suggests, had the elephant's trait of seeking revenge. Though a monkey, he believed in attacking human beings, especially women. The reason: revenge for being ill-treated by the street-vendor from whom he escaped. This habit soon landed Ganesan in police custody after a victim complained.

Chained to the verandah of the Museum police station in Trivandrum, a humbled Ganesan soon learned to behave and became a pet of the policemen who looked after him well. But soon came a judicial order that Ganesan be executed. No policeman was willing to carry out the order. Meanwhile press reports helped rally support for him, which included that of the Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Maneka Gandhi. Ganesan might now be given to a circus company or released in the Neyyar Dam reservoir near Trivandrum. Which basically means simians can get away with monkey business.

WASTED PAPERS



■ Many universities award Ph.D degrees by the dozen giving rise to the impression that after all a doctorate is not the pinnacle of academic achievement and that the theses being churned out by scholars are not as valuable as made out to be.

But one such cynic working in the Meerut University office who believed that doctoral theses are worth only their weight in paper, obliged a passing *raddiwalla* with three such bundles. The bound volumes envinced the curiosity of someone who came to a waste-paper shop in Muzaffarnagar. It did not take long for these to be restored to the dust-coated shelves of the university. The papers were not yet evaluated and the three scholars concerned had not even appeared for their interviews on their theses. The ritual inquiry has been ordered by the university. For the three scholars it would have been a case of many years of hard work going to waste. Literally.

ACTIVE POLICEMAN

■ The apathy of the capital's police is legendary. Wags say that the only thing that shakes them into action is money. But going by this policeman's case, it seems even moolah doesn't have such a dramatic effect on them any more.

Recently, a bus conductor came to a station house officer (SHO) at a local police station with a complaint. He had been robbed of Rs 70 of the earnings from the sale of tickets. The SHO, sitting sleepily on his seat, listened half-heartedly.

Deciding that it wasn't worth his while to exert himself over a mere Rs 70 he came up with an alternate solution. He quietly dug into his pockets, brought out the required amount and handed it over to the conductor and stretched out again on his chair. For the awe-struck conductor, it was a demonstration of efficiency beyond belief.

SNAKE GUARDS

■ Apart from snake-charmers, there are others who can put a reptile to good use. One such person was an unauthorised hawker selling what looked like medicines outside the stately Reserve Bank building in the capital.

During a recent swoop by the municipal staff on all illegal hawkers, this medicine-seller sat back coolly—while the others gathered their wares and fled—and let his assistants face the music.

Only these were no ordinary assistants but two serpents usually carried around by such quacks more to attract crowds than to serve as guards. The snakes uncoiled and slithered out of their box hissing menacingly at the law enforcers who till then were baring their fangs at the roadside hawkers. The municipal staff thought it wise not to accept the challenge and let the medicine man be for the moment and slithered away.

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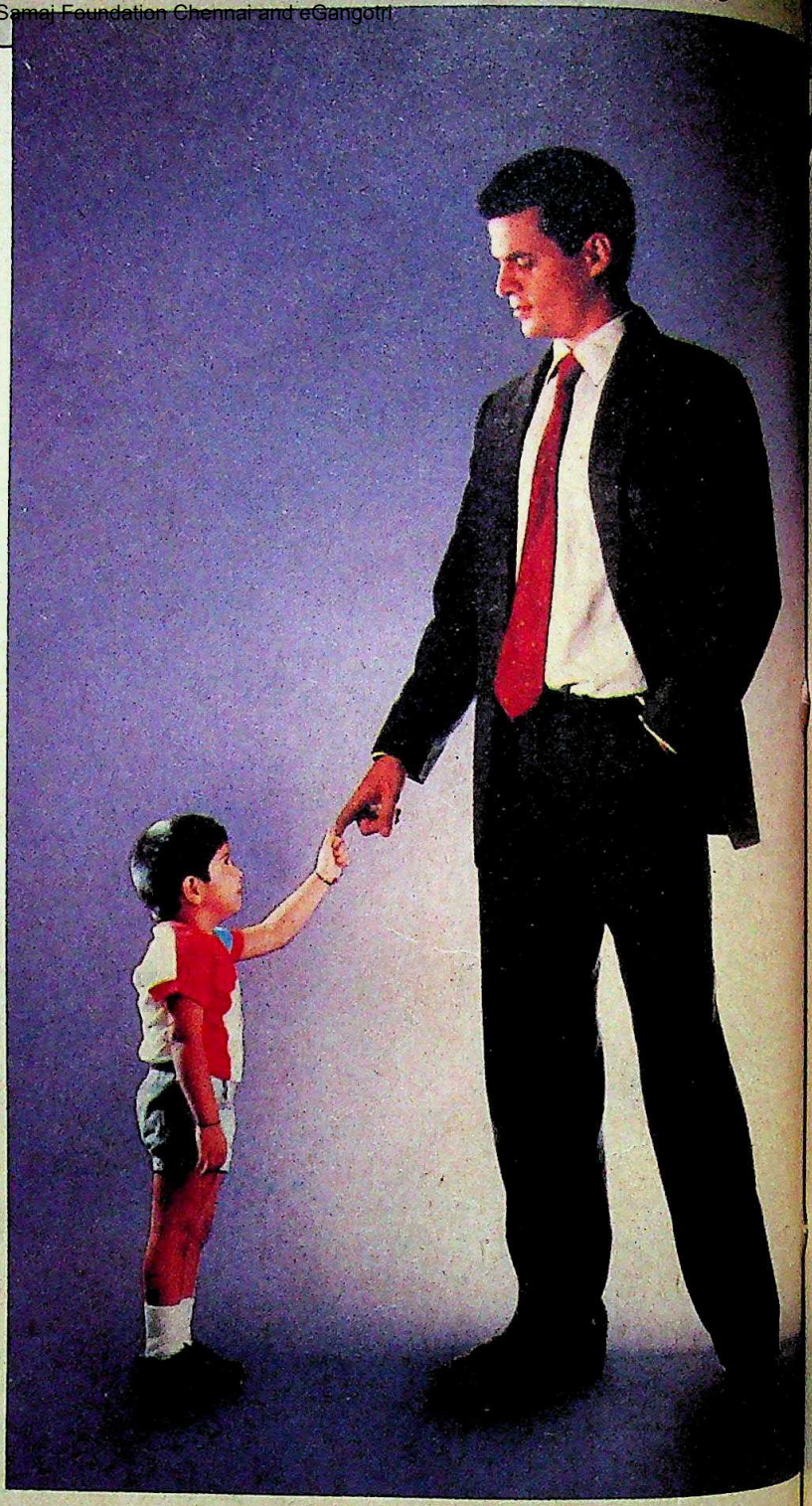

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Every time the country has taken a step forward, it's because someone dared. Dared to take on challenges that no one else would. The history of Kirloskar Electric is living testimony to this belief. It is the history of engineering firsts in industrial electrics and electronics in India.

If you have got your priorities right, things begin to happen. Kirloskar Electric was one of the first Indian companies to realize the importance of electronic controls and CNCs for Indian industry and to start manufacturing them. One step at a time. We indigenized the technology and started the CNC revolution in India almost single-handedly.

But the need of the hour was relevant technology. In a country like ours where resources are tight, there's no way we can replace lakhs of solid old machine tools overnight. The answer, of course, is to make the best of both worlds: give CNC capabilities to the old machines. That's just what we've been doing. Retrofitting them on a crash basis. And simultaneously making some innovative contributions to CNC retrofit technology.

For instance, we've come up with a totally new concept in turning automation called Companion that won, at its very first appearance, the highly prestigious FIE award at IMTEX '89.

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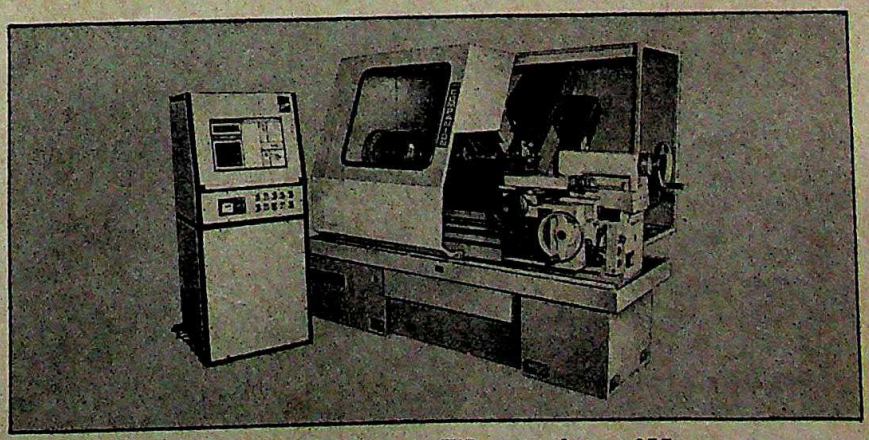

When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.

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USSR

Pangs of Change

BARELY fifty yards from the headquarters of the Soviet news agency Tass in Moscow begins Ulitsa Stanislavskovo, a nondescript street ending in a cul-de-sac, on which stands an equally nondescript building, the permanent mission (popularly called embassy) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

It was here last fortnight that a significant new chapter in the history of the Soviet Union was being written, one that could influence the world in months to come, one that brought to a head the simmering political crisis in the great socialist empire's highest echelons and one that could decide the fate of the charismatic Soviet President, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, his *perestroika* and *glasnost* and everything else that he stands for.

For a while, that insignificant building in Moscow became the eye of the sub-nationalistic, ethnic storm brewing along the outer rim of the vast Union, that drew the world press in their hundreds, putting a question mark over the future of the Great White Russian Empire and leaving its southern periphery sullied by blotches of blood.

Last week it also drew in the KGB. Two sub-machine-gun shots broke the silence of the night as dozens of vehicles screeched to a halt on the snow-covered street. Within seconds, men of the powerful Soviet secret service, wearing bullet-proof vests and carrying carbines, broke through the door of the Azerbaijani mission, told those inside to go down on their knees with their arms raised and picked the four men they wanted most. These included Etibar Mamedov, the key Moscow-based leader of the Azerbaijani secessionist Popular Front.

In the early hours of the morning, the KGB troops returned again to ransack the building, searching for arms and documents. "These are a bunch of fascists. They made me sit on my knees for eight hours and beat me up," cried Sevil Jahan, 36, and six months pregnant. The Government had its explanation ready. It said all it had done was to clear the place of criminal elements.

The troops struck simultaneously in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, in the cities of Lenkoran and Djalilabad which the insurgents had claimed to have under

their control, and in the autonomous republic of Nakhichevan which had challenged Soviet might last fortnight by announcing secession and appealing to Turkey and Iran for help.

The President sounded stern. "We are using force against the criminals, the vandals and the extremists," said Gorbachev. Added Interior Minister Vadim V. Bakatin: "There is a civil war on. And we have to stop it." Civil war, actually, was a euphemism. For the long-standing ethno-religious conflict between the Muslim Azerbaijanis and the Christian Armenians *(see box)* had begun to take on the tones of a full-fledged war between two sovereign republics, with both sides using armed helicopters and armoured cars.

Now, after watching in indecision and

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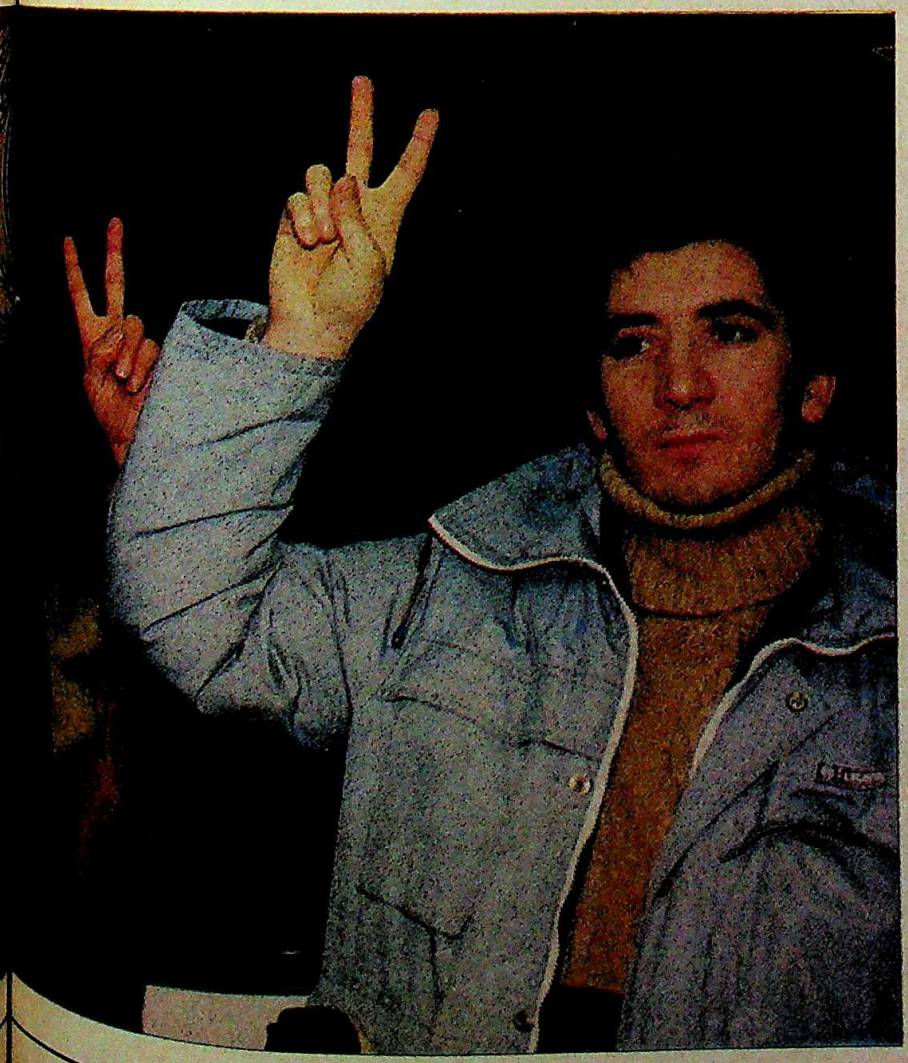
silence for more than a fortnight a crisis unprecedented in the country's history since the Second World War, the Soviet state had finally decided to act. "We had absolutely no choice but to resort to the use of force in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Even the most liberal democracies in the world, whether it is India, Great Britain or the United States of America are often compelled to use force and other tough measures when they are up against extremists," said a senior member of the party's central committee.

THAT was not all. Alongside, Gorbachev also initiated a process to set his own house in order. Out went Abdul Rakhman Vezirov, a former Soviet consul general in Calcutta and till now the chief of the Communist Party unit in Azerbaijan. There were rumours also that Eduard Shevardnadze, the articulate foreign minister from Georgia—another troubled republic—was tipped to take over the ministry looking after the nationalities. "This is a very, very significant and crucial period for Gorbachev, all that he stands for and our government. We have to move extremely carefully," said M.N. Nishanov, chairman of the House of Nationalities in the Supreme Soviet, who is known to be one of Gorbachev's favourites for the politburo when it is reconstituted.

REUTER

Gorbachev talks to Lithuanians; (below) black flags cover Lenin's plaque and Soviet insignia as placard waving Azerbaijan secessionists demonstrate; (left) killings in Baku



On the surface, however, the crackdown has not had much effect as yet. Even the official agencies reported that 113 trains carrying essential goods were still blocked at the borders of Azerbaijan, while another passenger train was derailed by saboteurs. And in the town of Lenkoran, demonstrators destroyed the statue of Kirov, Lenin's right-hand man, besides tearing up their communist party membership cards.

In the Soviet capital Moscow too, the protesters were undaunted. "Gorbachev Hitler, Gorbachev Ceausescu," a group of protesters chanted, till someone interrupted, "No, Gorbachev Ivan the Terrible". And at the Azerbaijani mission in Moscow, the plaques bearing the visage of Lenin were covered with black flags of mourning and the blue, red and green flag of independence with the crescent moon and star in the middle.

"This is becoming a *jehad* (holy war). If the Afghans could defeat the Russians and send them packing, so can we," boasted Roshan Vakilov, a 24-year-old worker in a flower-selling cooperative whose brother was among the first to fall in the fighting. Much more ominous was the statement made by Mamedov on the eve of his arrest from the Azerbaijani mission. "Unless Gorbachev withdraws his interventionist troops from our nation, he will have a second Afghanistan on his hands," he threatened.

Unfortunately for Gorbachev, the defiance and secessionist clamour in Azerbaijan was no isolated event, but a micro-

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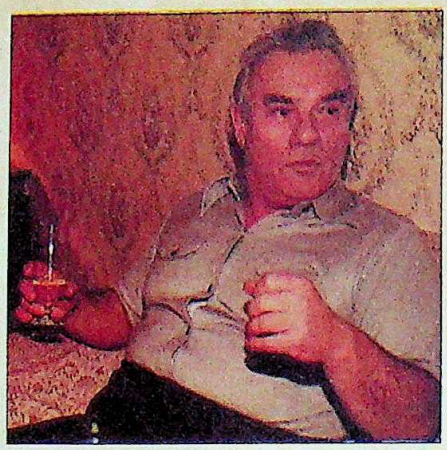
cosm of the turmoil and upheaval threatening his nation. Barely a few kilometres away from the Azerbaijani mission, similar secessionist voices were heard in the Armenian "embassy", even though Armenians consider the Soviet Army their protectors. "What do the Russians give us except oil? Why should we remain their slaves?" asked Samvel Yenokovich, an Armenian factory worker in Moscow.

So total was the disenchantment with the Soviet Union and so great the sub-nationalistic feelings that many of the Armenian refugees even wanted to know the address of the Indian Embassy in Moscow so that they could go to Calcutta and join the tiny Armenian population there. "I have three strong sons and a son-in-law. Each one of them will work very hard. For God's sake, take all of us with you to India," begged Helen Akasmova, a 60-year-old matriarch. Even the Armenian Permanent Representative to Moscow, Edward Aikazian, stopped just short of demanding secession. "Yes, we Armenians are demanding substantive changes in the Soviet Constitution that will give us more political and economic freedom," he told INDIA TODAY.

The storm from Transcaucasia—with the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians and the Georgians all clamouring for virtual secession—combined with similar gales in the west and north-west to leave the leadership in Moscow shaken. Last month Gorbachev had failed in his personal efforts to persuade Lithuanian secessionists to be patient. And in the grain bowl of the Ukraine, the most important non-Russian republic with a population of more than 50 million, demonstrators hit the streets again last week, forming a 300-km-long human chain, waving 'Free Ukraine' flags and demanding freedom.



"If we want to have democracy we have to learn to live with the mobs. The problem in the Soviet Union is that there is either nothing or tanks and gas."

ERIC KOMAROV
Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow

The frenetic pace of events in the past few weeks may have dominated world headlines and swung the spotlight sharply on the ethnic and subnationalistic problems in the Soviet Union. But they constituted just another round—albeit the bloodiest so far—in a series of similar troubles on the federation's outer rim that began with the December 1986 clashes in Kazakhastan which claimed three lives *(see box)*.

Culminating in the current unrest in Transcaucasia, the events of the past two years have shattered many myths about the Soviet system's resilience and the strength of the ideology that stands behind it. It has questioned the very philosophy underlying the Leninist view that a multi-national Soviet Union could hang together as a union of working classes.

At the same time it has strengthened the argument of the old-timers and conservative communists that a multi-national system like theirs can survive only under strong central command and con-

Troubled Zones

February 1988: Clashes erupt between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over the possession of Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous region in Azerbaijan. Thirty-two Armenians slaughtered in the town of Sumgait. Clashes continue for several weeks, claiming 100 lives.

October 1988: Pro-democracy mobs take to the streets in Minsk, capital of the Byelorussian republic. Tear gas is used to disperse them.

March 1989: Similar demonstrations occur in the republic of Moldavia, bordering Rumania, and are broken up using force.

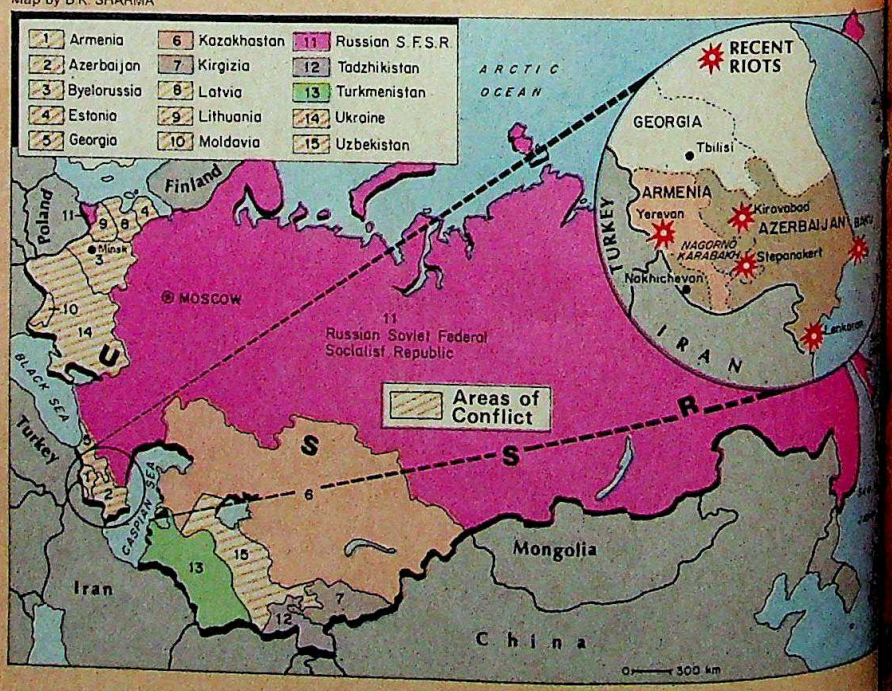
April 1989: Pro-autonomy demonstrations in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. Soviet troops used to quell them. More than 20 killed by poison gas.

June 1989: Uzbek tribals massacre more than 100 Meshketian Turks, a tribe exiled by Stalin to Uzbekistan. Rioting follows in Nagorno-Karabakh and in Kiev, capital of Ukraine.

October 1989: Riots in many Soviet republics. Lithuanians virtually announce secession. Demonstrators clash with police in Moldavia. The republics of Estonia and Latvia too grow restive.

January 1990: Supreme Soviet returns administrative control of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Azerbaijanis. Armenian Parliament retorts by including the enclave in its economic plan. Independence rally by Azerbaijans attacks Armenians.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



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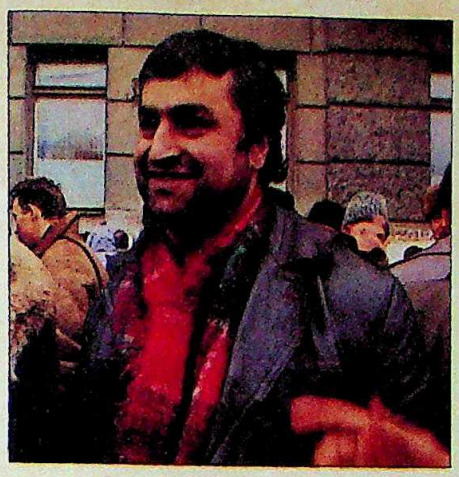
"What have the Russians ever given to Armenia except for oil? Is there any reason why we the people of Armenia should remain their slaves?"

SAMVEL YENOKOVICH
Armenian Factory Worker



trol. Even the most ardent supporters of Gorbachev concede that these long dormant tensions, joining in a wide arc from Estonia to Uzbekistan, would never have surfaced but for the general opening up of the system.

"These problems always existed," admits Alexey Kuprianov, a senior economist and analyst at the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist Systems, of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and adds: "Now it has all come to the surface because of a general opening up of the country under Gorbachev's stewardship. People are no longer afraid and today they are openly saying or demanding what they want." This, indeed, is the price Gorbachev is paying for denying himself and his government the all-encompassing powers his predecessors enjoyed.

THE freedom of expression enjoyed in the Soviet Union today is bewildering. In Moscow metro stations, it is common to see Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians and even Ukrainians sticking secessionist posters—an unthinkable act till yesterday.

But Gorbachev's Soviet Union is a vastly changed land. Today, in Pushkin Square, bang in front of the *Moscow News* office—where crowds gather every afternoon to read notices of processions and demonstrations—various minority leaders hold impromptu meetings openly preaching secession, while uniformed police look on. "To anyone who has been here even five years ago, the change is startling. Can you imagine a Sikh putting up Khalistan posters at New Delhi railway station in front of the police?" asks a top Soviet official.

Inevitably, comparisons are made with China. After the Chinese Government moved with an iron hand and crushed the protesters in Tiananmen Square, it was said that Deng had erred in bringing economic *perestroika* before *glasnost*. At that time, many believed that Gorbachev, who had gone about it the other way around, had adopted the right approach. Now Gorbachev is being questioned. The coming months will show which was more sensible.

Apart from the general liberalisation of the Soviet system the open secessionist clamour is also a consequence of the tumultuous happenings in East Europe. "Today, the Soviet Union's minorities are asking: 'If the Czechs, East Germans, Poles and Hungarians can shake off the Russian dominance why can't we?' " reasoned a senior diplomat. It is no surprise then that the winds of defiance are blowing even in

Yunis Abbasov, a wounded Azerbaijan resident of the town of Shusha in the local hospital

TASS

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Outer Mongolia where public demonstrations demanding democracy were held last week.

Already, party conservatives are accusing Gorbachev of being taken in by the "fairy-tales of capitalism" and destroying the empire his predecessors had built up. Defiantly, last fortnight, Gorbachev dismissed his conservative critics as "rabble". But high-level sources close to the Kremlin and well-informed diplomats said that the President was worried, more than ever before. "This is his moment of trial and he must decide firmly and quickly what he wants to do," Mikhail Bocharov, a key member of the Supreme Soviet and the liberal inter-regional group of deputies' told INDIA TODAY.

"The ethnic troubles facing our country do not mean that we stop *perestroika*. They mean that we need more *perestroika*, and quickly."

MIKHAIL BOCHAROV
Member, Supreme Soviet

THE conservatives argue that while it is all very well to talk of *glasnost* for form's sake, the consequences could be disastrous for a multi-national federation like the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's critics also warn that if things continue as they are, the winds of secession could soon reach the central Asian Islamic republics which have so far been quiet. Given their affinity with and proximity to the Mujahedin-controlled areas of Afghanistan and given the rising numbers of men of Muslim stock in the Soviet Army, this could grow into an utterly unmanageable and serious threat. The conservatives in the party also lay great stress on Iran and Pakistan's immediate response in favour of the Azerbaijani Muslims. "The population in the Islamic republics is growing substantially faster than that of the European republics. A little more laxity and we would reach a point of no return," said a political scientist, one among the small, dwindling community of conservative academics.

The Government makes light of such fears but admits that the situation in the Muslim-dominated republics is sensitive. Oleg Vladimirovich Bostorin, chief of the South Asian Division in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, says his government has noted instances of Pakistan and Afghan Mujahedin training people from Turkmenia and sending them back to indulge in subversion.

Where does all this leave Gorbachev? The questions facing him have no easy answers. "In a way what he faces today is the dilemma of a democratic leader but in

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN

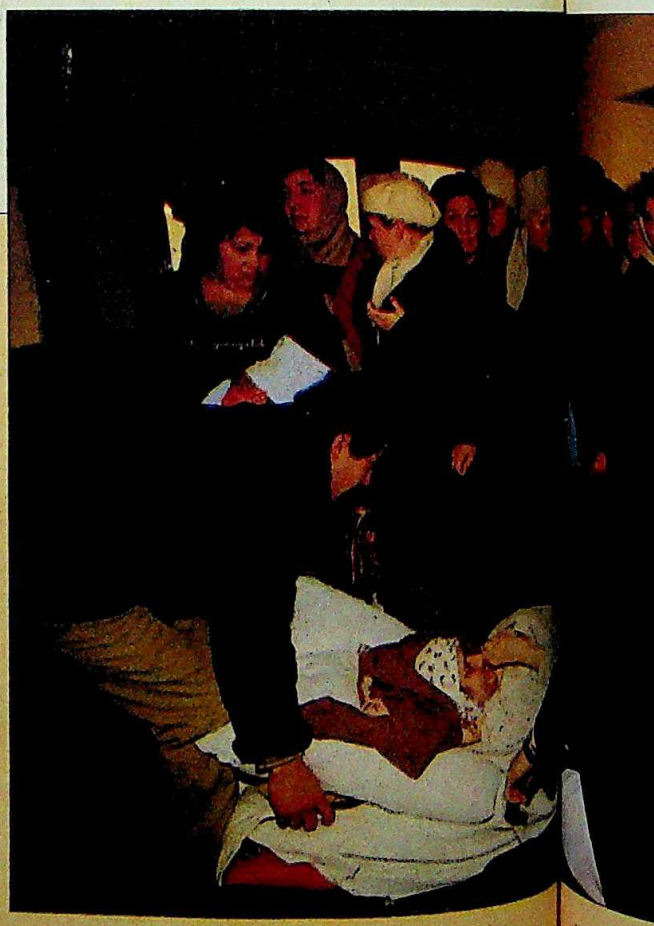
Lands of Fire

ANYONE conversant with a communal situation in India could not find a more familiar scene. Azerbaijanis and Armenians killing one another in the streets where they had lived together for generations.

After two years of protracted rioting, the tensions spilled out into the open last fortnight and engulfed almost all of the Transcaucasian region. Within weeks almost, all the two lakh Armenians had fled Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. So had the three lakh or so Azerbaijanis from Armenia—creating two different Diasporas. "They have burnt all our churches. This is a totally communal situation," charges Sergei Tezarakilov, 33, an Armenian engineer, now one among the hundreds sleeping on the floors of the Armenian mission in Moscow. Responds Laila Haji, an Azeri professor of psychophilosophy at the Moscow Medical Institute: "Christians and Armenians all over the world are helping people killing us. We who only follow the prophet's teachings to defend ourselves."

Large territories in the two republics are being laid waste as militias belonging to the two communities carry out guerrilla warfare. Armenia is the worst sufferer as all supply lines linking it with the Russian mainland pass through Azerbaijan. Rail traffic has been suspended for weeks, and no matter how formidable the Soviet airlift capability, it is incapable of supporting a three million population particularly as it also has to sustain the Najibullah Government in Kabul through winter. In both republics, people are starving and are stranded without fuel.

In more ways than one, the conflagration currently convulsing the Soviet Union has its roots in ancient and medieval history. In an exotic part of the world, close to where two continents meet and close to the battlefield of the crusades, the two communities have clashed periodically. The first evidence of Armenians in the region comes from



Injured woman from Baku

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"These people (the KGB) are nothing but a bunch of fascists. They made me sit on my knees for eight hours and they kept beating me mercilessly."

SEVIL JAHAN
Pregnant Azerbaijani Woman

his case he does not have the benefit of having a democratic system backing him," says a diplomat.

Faced with such constraints, Gorbachev's options are limited. He could, of course, use force in the traditional manner of Soviet leaders. But the precedents of Tiananmen in China and Timisoara in Romania are daunting. He could also try and solve the problem politically and through constitutional means, but his party and the Government don't really have either the experience or the means to do so.

In such a situation, it is common among Soviet intellectuals and leaders to draw parallels with India. "Actually we take heart when we look at India which is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-national society like ours," says Vladimir Luken who heads the Supreme Soviet's brains trust on domestic and international affairs. "Now that we are considering how to restructure our system, I maintain that we have to find a system that falls between the Indian and the European parliaments," Luken declares.

Echoing his views is Yuli Vorontsov, the first deputy foreign minister and a key member of the party central committee: "Now that we have been subjected to this secessionist trouble, we can appreciate much better what India faces in Kashmir and Punjab."

Other senior analysts at decision-making levels also point out the Soviet Union needs to learn from India the art of controlling mobs. "If we have democracy, we have to learn to live with the angry mobs who could turn violent. The problem in the Soviet Union is that there is either nothing or there are tanks and poison gas," laments Eric Komarov, head of the Indian history and political science section at the Moscow-based Institute of Oriental Studies.

Also, Soviet scholars who have been studying the Indian system say that the situation in the Soviet Union is much more difficult than in a country where democratic mechanisms—however faulty—exist to provide an escape route for such tensions. "What upsets me most of all here is that groups like the Azerbaijan Popular Front do not even make the pretence of condemning violence. In India, even the most communal of groups will condemn

the excavations of sixth century B.C. In the middle ages, their neighbours to the west were the Albanian Caucasians. In the fifth century A.D., they joined the Armenian mainstream and became Christian, like them. Today, they inhabit the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region within Azerbaijan which the Armenian republic claims. Six hundred years later, the Seljuk Turks invaded the region, occupied the area to the west of Armenia and Islamised the population. These are today's Azerbaijanis—yet again a case of centuries-old neighbours and cousins carrying their medieval rivalries from generation to generation.

As time passed, the Armenians surpassed the Azeris in education and accomplishment, while development in Azerbaijan (the land of fire), which the Indian Parsis used to visit for the pilgrimage of Atishgah, was concentrated around Baku with its oil wells. Today Armenians, though a much smaller minority, are in the forefront of Soviet society. The community's showpiece is economist Agan Bagyan. But the Azeris have languished. Also, nearly 40 per cent of the Azeri population (five million) lives in neighbouring Iran and the community has a generations-old dream of uniting with the population across the border.

The hostility between the two communities first spilled into the streets in 1905 as they clashed during the first Russian revolution. In 1918, Armenians helped the communists suppress a Muslim revolt. But the Azeris more than avenged this a few months later that year as the Turkish army occupied the area and massacred the Armenians. Given this history, the Russian Government first gave the Nagorno-Karabakh region to Armenia in 1920. But just three years later it was made an autonomous region within Azerbaijan.

Through their agitation to either annex Nagorno-Karabakh or at least acquire a corridor to link them with it, the Armenians are trying to correct what they think is a historical wrong done to them. In the process they and the Azerbaijanis have presented Gorbachev with an extremly difficult problem in what is communally and ethnically one of the world's most varied and contentious regions.

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violence publicly even if they are themselves responsible for it. At least there is a democratic tradition," says Komarov.

Komarov and others in his department underline the fact that the absence of democracy has dangerous consequences for a diverse society. "I don't say democracy will reform everything but it helps. Yours is an even more multinational society than ours but India has not disintegrated despite all that the doomsayers have predicted," he says.

"What we need is not rhetoric but an effort to ensure that the republics stay within the Union voluntarily, so that everyone feels he is a Soviet citizen."

GARY KASPAROV
World Chess Champion

THE Soviet Union has as yet only taken a few hesitant steps towards real democracy and Gorbachev has the additional problem of walking the thin ice between those who want him to push harder towards opening up and those baying for his blood for allegedly having uncorked all these "evil" forces through his "hare-brained, western-oriented ideas".

The father-figure among the conservatives, 69-year-old Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, is already leading a move within the party's higher circles to stop the "drift" before it is "too late". At the same time, the liberal radicals, led by Boris Yeltsin and now constituted into the inter-regional group of deputies, are accusing him of going too slow and not showing sufficient spine. "The ethnic troubles do not mean that we stop *perestroika*. They mean that we need more *perestroika*, and quickly," says Bocharov.

Last fortnight, the liberals increased pressure on Gorbachev by comparing his action in Azerbaijan with the intervention in Afghanistan. At a press conference in Moscow, four members of the inter-regional group of deputies virtually accused him of adopting Stalinist methods in sending forces to Transcaucasia and invoking emergency powers there. Yet last week, the Moscow grapevine was abuzz with fairly credible rumours that Ligachev, along with Defence Minister Dmitri Timofeyevich Yazov, was in Baku, supervising the crackdown.

With all this, Gorbachev must have found himself pushed to the wall. Last fortnight he made a fervent appeal for peace and order and yet again repeated his promise of making a transition to a true federation. "Up to now our state has existed as a centralised and unitary state and none of us has yet had the experience of living in a federation," he argued, promising a "full-blooded federation in which all republics will be able to feel they really are sovereign states". The Lithuanians, the Azerbaijanis, the Ukrainians and the Moldavians have all dismissed the statement as a pointless platitude. But even Gorbachev's supporters say it will be a difficult promise to keep.

While the Soviet Union has a constitu-

SOVIET REPUBLICS

Mighty Maze

THE seeds of the recurrent clamour for secession in the Soviet Union lie as much in the curious, rather fragile, way in which the federation is constituted as in history. On paper, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is perhaps the most liberal federation in the world. Each of its 15 republics has a clear, unfettered right to secede. Each has its own flag, its own national anthem, and sometimes—as in case of the Ukraine and Byelorussia—an envoy to the UN. Each has a mission in Moscow, known as its embassy. And on paper, each has equal rights and powers. But the reality is different. Russia dominates the other republics.

The Soviet Union follows a curious four-tier system. Apart from the Central Government and the 15 national republics, there are 20 autonomous republics within them. Nakhichevan in Azerbaijan, which declared secession last fortnight, is one. The fourth tier is constituted by eight autonomous regions and 10 autonomous areas within the Union republics; an example is the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region in Azerbaijan over which the trouble erupted. Interestingly, the dominant Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic itself contains 16 autonomous republics besides five autonomous regions.

The Soviet explanation for the complex system is that it is the only way a federation can hold together such diverse nationalities and minorities while retaining their autonomy. In reality, however, the autonomy is notional. The only force compelling the republics to stay together is the dominance of the Communist Party and the Russian power. In fact, a prime reason for secessionist demands coming to the fore is the diminishing fear of the party.

The situation is further complicated by the way the Russian empire has evolved, particularly over the last century. It has tended to shrink or expand, depending on Russian power at any given point in history. In the late 19th century, Czarist conquests led to the annexation of large areas along the Russian rim like the lands along the Black Sea, including Azerbaijan. Similarly, 19th century conquerors reached out in the east to the tip of Siberia. And later conquests resulted in the annexation of eastern Ukraine after the defeat of Napoleon, large tracts of Poland, and then the Baltic states.

The Transcaucasian region went through several rounds of reorganisation within the Russian empire and the Baltic states kept moving in and out. Soon after the October Revolution they achieved independence. But soon, Russia again annexed them in return for a deal with Germany on the eve of World War II. The Baltic states now say that by seeking independence they are only demanding that a historic wrong be set right.

Evidently, the Leninist dream that the ideals of communism and the unity of the working classes would keep such diverse nationalities together, has been shattered. Today, challenged by an overwhelmingly secessionist Baltic region, a rebellious Moldavia, a warring Transcaucasia and an uneasily quiet Islamic region bordering Iran and Afghanistan, Lenin's successors have to admit that something has indeed gone wrong with the visionary's projections.

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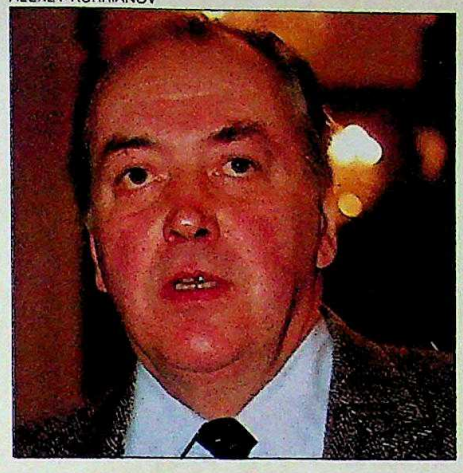
> **"These problems always existed. Now it has all come to the surface because of a general opening up. People are openly demanding what they want."**
>
> ALEXEY KUPRIANOV
> *USSR Academy of Sciences*

ALEXEY KURRIANOV



tion with a most liberal interpretation of a federative union—Article 72 unambiguously gives each constituent republic the right to secede—the reality is entirely different and through the decades all the outlying republics have been under the domination of the Russians.

The authors of the Constitution obviously did not want anyone to take Article 72 seriously. "It was a little like Stalin promising everybody full human rights," says a veteran diplomat. The presumption was that as long as the entire system was controlled by one omnipotent Russian-dominated party and Central Government there would be no harm having such clauses in the Constitution.

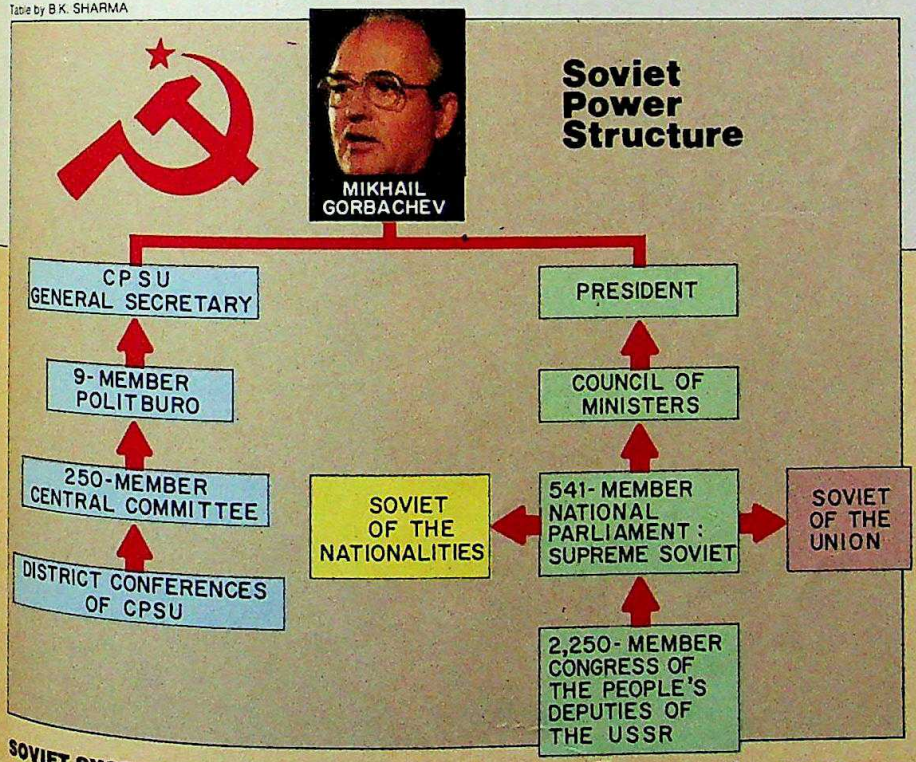
But there is a world of difference between Stalin's Soviet Union and the country steered by Gorbachev. Now, as Gorbachev is beginning to loosen controls and is perhaps even moving in the direction of amending Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution that gives the Communist Party the leading role in running the state, the rebellious republics are reading out the clause to him.

To his credit he has not turned down the argument with force or contempt. He has tried to buy time—"we still have to work out a mechanism for secession"—but with very limited success. "What we need is not rhetoric but a genuine effort to ensure that the republics want to stay within the Union voluntarily, so that everyone feels he is a Soviet citizen," says world chess champion Gary Kasparov, 26, who has emerged as a significant liberal spokesman.

Torn between liberals and conservatives and his own world view and plans for his nation, Gorbachev has been holding repeated party conclaves to find a way out. The politburo met last week, reportedly in a relatively uneasy atmosphere. Though no one openly questioned Gorbachev there was pressure from the hardliners to do away with the democratic facade and deal with the situation more firmly.

But Gorbachev and his supporters be President. But he presides over an elaborate power structure *(see chart)* which becomes more baffling than ever in a situation of flux—as exists today.

Table by B.K. SHARMA



SOVIET SYSTEM

State of Flux

PARADOXICALLY, while it is the Chinese system that has acquired the reputation of being inscrutable, the Soviet system of power is much more confusing. At the apex sits the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), who is all-powerful particularly when, like Mikhail Gorbachev, he also happens to

Article 6 of the Constitution gives the CPSU the dominant role in decision-making, something now being questioned by party liberals. But the real decision-making body is the nine-member politburo of the CPSU which, in turn, is elected by the 250 members of the central committee elected by the party's district conferences.

The party power structure normally dominates the state power structure, which is led by the 2,250-member Congress of the People's Deputies, which elects from among itself the 541-member Supreme Soviet, the national Parliament, which has two houses: Soviet of the Nationalities and Soviet of the Union. The Supreme Soviet appoints the Council of Ministers. Members of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet don't have to be from the CPSU. But given the party's pre-eminence, over 80 per cent of the people's deputies come from the CPSU.

The demand for the abolition of Article 6 is aimed at ending the party's domination. While Gorbachev may not want the CPSU to lose power, he may like to see more liberals in the Congress. Of late, he has been bypassing the more conservative politburo by getting his decisions cleared by the Congress and presenting hardliners in the politburo with a fait accompli. With elections to a majority of the republics—which elect the deputies of the Congress—due in March, he is obviously trying to fill the body with his supporters.

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are refusing to be pushed on the defensive on the question of rising secessionism. They are in fact trying to turn the situation to their advantage, arguing that if the system had functioned in a democratic manner, the trouble in Azerbaijan would not have arisen.

A Gorbachev loyalist and member of the Supreme Soviet explains: "If proper elections had been held in the republic, then the Popular Front would have contested and it would have won a few positions. Their energies would then have been spent arguing in the Soviet rather than in procuring guns and killing Soviet soldiers with them."

"Actually we take heart when we look at India which is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-national society like ours."

VLADIMIR LUKEN
Member, Supreme Soviet

SO while Gorbachev promised action, he said he had no intention of allowing his current troubles to slow down the process of economic and political *perestroika*. "We need *perestroika* the way we need oxygen," he told a meeting of workers and intellectuals on January 19.

Yet *perestroika* is exactly what the troubles have hit hardest—by diverting Gorbachev's attention from his principal long-term objective, the restructuring of the Soviet Union's doddering economy. "You have to sympathise with him," says an Asian diplomat, "he has dismantled the old system but hasn't got the time to build a new one in its place."

The result is total confusion as the new cooperatives—a euphemism for the private sector—and the bureaucracy contend with each other. The currency black market flourishes despite the recent tenfold increase in the exchange value of the US dollar for foreigners. Last month, the Government allowed business enterprises with surplus hard currency to auction it. The average price fetched by the dollar was nine and a half roubles, compared with the official six and a quarter. Some deals were clinched at rates as high as 15 oubles.

"Making the ouble a convertible currency was one of Gorbachev's topmost priorities. On that depends the entire future of our economy. But today, with fires raging all around him, does he even have the time to think about such esoteric stuff?" asked a diplomat. Adds Alexander Voznesensky, a well-known economic commentator: "We can't afford to slow down on economic *perestroika*. The longer the wrong ideology pushes the economy, the more harm it does, increasing social

Gonsalves, Vorontsov, Nishanov and S.K. Singh in Moscow: durable links

succeeded in easing most of the regional conflicts in the world.

The Soviet wish is that India and Pakistan too should make up. "We are watching events in Kashmir with great concern," says Bostorin, adding, "Since Pakistan is more irresponsible, India needs to be even more responsible." What worries India is that both the US and the USSR concur on the importance

INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

A Strong Bind

It might have been just another routine, annual chit-chat. But Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh's meeting in Moscow last week with Soviet officials was anything but that. It was the first high-level visit to Moscow after the new Indian Government assumed office and Singh was checking out Soviet responses on various questions.

With the Kashmir problem coming to a head, Pakistan was obviously on top of the agenda. For quite some time now, there has been uncertainty in South Block about the impact the post-*perestroika* Soviet world view would have on its South Asia policy. Quite simply, India needed reassurance.

The Soviets provided it in ample measure. Says Indian ambassador Alfred Gonsalves: "It is my judgement that if the Indo-Soviet relationship is subjected to a test, there will be no difference from the past." Asserts Oleg Bostorin, director of the South Asian Division in the Soviet Foreign Ministry: "As V.P. Singh has said about India, the Indo-Soviet policy in our country too is a national policy. It is not the intention of anybody in this country to take away a slice of the Indian pie and barter it with the West." But he admits that he is aware of anxieties in India. "The Indo-Soviet friendship is like an old marriage. After a while both spouses take it for granted. But suddenly if a new girlfriend comes in, she gets more attention," he chuckles.

The Soviet Union has been keen to emphasise that it stands by India as staunchly as before.

Yuli Vorontsov, the first deputy foreign minister, says firmly: "We are with India. But we are absolutely sure that the India-Pakistan tensions will not grow into a conflict." Soviet spokesmen say the Gorbachev approach has already

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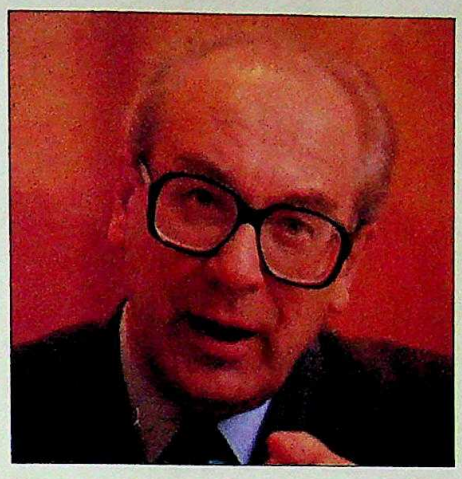
"Now that we have been subjected to this secessionist trouble, we can appreciate much better what India faces in the troubled states of Kashmir and Punjab."

YULI VORONTSOV
First Deputy Foreign Minister



tensions."

Already riots over the non-availability of food and vodka have taken place in Ukraine. And strikes in the major coal mines, first Donbass (in Ukraine) and then Varkuta (in northern Russia) have affected even the heating during the winter.

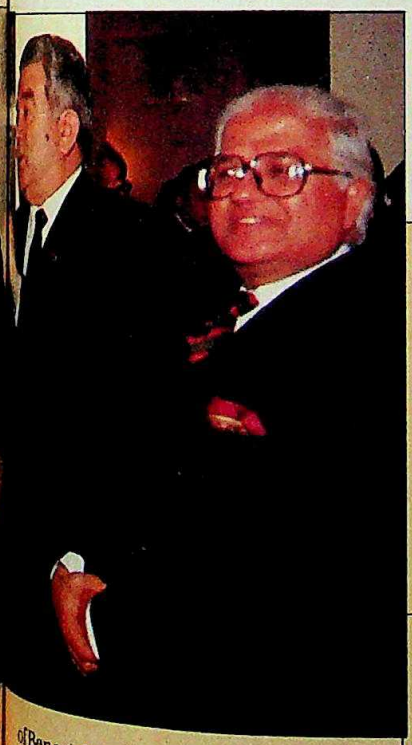
Under pressure from workers, wages have been raised but the question of price reform has been kept hanging leading to the classical disaster of too much money chasing too few goods. The result: queues for everything from chicken to jewellery and from perfume to pullovers. The situation is only complicated by the traditional Soviet fear of shortages and resultant hoarding.

ACADEMIC journals have published papers on hoarding of commodities like detergents. Many families have stored detergents for more than five years and there are numerous cases of illness caused by inhaling the noxious fumes emitted by stored detergents.

Naturally, there is a lot of grumbling and questions are raised about Gorbachev's ability to carry out economic reforms, even as the conservatives call him a failure on the domestic political front.

As excitement builds up for this fortnight's plenary meeting of the party central committee, Gorbachev and his supporters are now planning to recover lost ground and deliver a decisive blow against conservatives in feverish behind-the-scenes moves in the Kremlin. Major changes are not likely just now though elections to the local Soviets in a majority of the republics in March will cast their shadow on the future. Among the republics going to the polls is the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which is to the Soviet Union what the Hindi heartland is to India.

The central committee session too will see plenty of three-way sabre-rattling and set the agenda for the 27th Party Congress scheduled to be held in October this year. Originally, the congress was supposed to be held in 1991 but Gorbachev has advanced it. His gameplan is clear: the mood for change and *perestroika* should be built up to such a level that he is able to bring about a massive overhaul of the 250-member central committee and then of the politburo which is elected by the central committee *(see box)* and get rid of the conservatives. For months now Gorbachev has worked towards that end



of Benazir's survival in office. Like the US State Department, Soviet officials too assert that despite her weaknesses, Benazir is the best deal the world has got from Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the Soviets are worried about the growth of Pan-Islamism in the border regions—Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, which, effectively, includes Pakistan. "We are upset by the Pakistani response to Azerbaijan," says a spokesman.

Formally, the Soviets have adjusted to the political change in India much better than in 1977 when they took a totally pro-Mrs Gandhi line. Vorontsov visited Delhi immediately after the new Government took over and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze sent External Affairs Minister Inder Gujral a formal invitation to visit the USSR. Says Bostorin: "We have noticed that the (new) Government is very competent. The main posts are occupied by people who know the subject and that is very, very important. If anything we should see a greater fruition of our friendship." Adds Vorontsov: "I am absolutely firm that there will be no change in our policy towards India. If anything, the relationship will be stronger than before."

But India is worried that both the USSR and the US agree that Benazir Bhutto must survive in office.

One important area is economic relations. Many Indian business houses are eyeing the Soviet market for joint ventures. The only one so far, ITDC's Delhi Restaurant in Moscow, is a success.

There are also those who feel that the changing Soviet world view and global situation will ease tension in South Asia. Argues Tatyana Shaumian, secretary of the Centre for Indian studies at the USSR Academy of Sciences: "The changed situation should help India discover its own strengths in the region and lead the trend on the global easing of tension. In that case, the Indo-Soviet relations too could take a more fruitful turn in the direction of economy and industry."

India-watchers here are now looking forward to V.P. Singh's first meeting as prime minister with Gorbachev. Under the Indo-Soviet treaty, the leaders of the two countries are supposed to meet once a year. It is the Indian prime minister's turn to visit the USSR in 1990. And when he does, the Soviets would want to prove that they have finally acquired the pragmatism to relate to Indian leaders other than those from the Nehru-Gandhi family.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Moscow

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and the current ethnic explosion was the last thing he needed in his quest for a party set-up that backs him rather than digs pot-holes in his way.

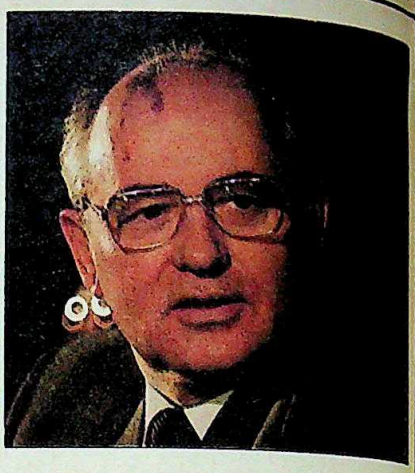
Predictably, this is also the time when the conservatives will go in for the kill taking heart from his discomfiture on the economic and domestic political front. For them it is now or never. The central committee meeting and then the party congress will mark the culmination of the five-year battle between Gorbachev and the old guard.

THE radical liberals led by Boris Yeltsin, economist Gavriil Popov and others could play a significant role in the battle. While they have been strident in criticising him, the liberals' ultimate hope is to make a deal with Gorbachev, giving him their support in return for a decisive move by him in favour of social democracy. They will demand that he abolish Article 6 which gives the Communist Party a dominant role, a concession Gorbachev will find very difficult to make.

But like Gorbachev's centrists and Ligachev's conservatives, Yeltsin's liberals too think their decisive moment has come. "For every political leader a moment comes when he has to make his position clear and take a firm decision. For Gorbachev, that moment has come," declares Bocharov, predicting that Gorbachev will make compromises with the party's right-wing and then follow it up with quick elections to its apex bodies including the central committee and the politburo. "If he doesn't decide now it will be too late tomorrow as it has been for his government in Azerbaijan," he warns.

"I promise you a full-blooded federation in which all the republics of the Soviet Union will be able to feel they really are sovereign states."

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV
Appealing for peace and order



Among political, diplomatic and academic circles in Moscow today, it is extremely fashionable to make comparisons with India. Many even compare Gorbachev's crisis with that faced by Rajiv Gandhi in his "Mr Clean" days, when he struggled against the bureaucracy and party power brokers, whose vested interests formed a formidable obstacle. Debilitated by violent ethnic, religious and political agitation, Rajiv failed to break through and lost out to the party. Gorbachev faces much the same problems. But unlike Rajiv, what he has on his side is the goodwill of almost the entire world. Most of the world wants him to win. For if the Soviet Union—a superpower, forming one-sixth of the world's land mass, traversing 11 of its 24 time-zones and the guardian of a fast-eroding ideology which its leaders once promised was the future of the world—is convulsed, the tremors will not stop at its borders.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in the Soviet Union
Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

Azerbaijanis line up outside a mosque in Moscow to mourn their dead

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Democracy and Disorder

"WE are not certain, we are never certain." This Camusesque wail aptly sketches the distemper of transition in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Six Stalinist regimes have fallen apart in breathlessly quick succession to one another, each with the consent of the Soviet leadership, particularly President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Democracy's dramatic triumph has brought, in its trail, a disorder that will take time to recompose into a political order. When that happens, probably around 1993, there will be a gaggle of social-democratic regimes in Eastern Europe, each with accents of local variation. Each will be a multi-party democracy, with the state regulating, not controlling, the economy. Public and private sectors will co-exist in mixed economies; the social gains of the last 40 years will not be given away, but enriched with political democracy.

Poland will be a little more capitalist than GDR. In Hungary, the only state in which the change is coming from above, the market will be more active than in the rest. Czechoslovakia, with its strong industrial base, will resemble Scandinavia. A question mark will hang around Rumania which saw the ruthless execution of its dictator, like a hangman's rope, as the transition here will prove to be the most difficult. It is obvious that the communists and their rivals-in-coalition will fight the coming elections in the spring as mortal rivals.

Democracy's dramatic triumph in six East European countries has brought in its trail a disorder that will take some time to recompose into a political order.

In some of the six, the communists will lose heavily. The governments that take over will have communists in them. Communists and socialists will together form a broadbased social-democratic coalition.

The pace and shape of the transition will be determined by the quality and quantity of investible capital and technologies flowing from Western Europe, Japan and the US. Eastern Europe will be gradually woven into a single European continental economy, submerging the sovereignties of 20 nation-states, and finally, into one common Europe home. Relations with both the USSR and the US will be friendly. But what is of utmost importance is the fact that the East Europeans will not forget that they owe their liberation more to President Gorbachev than to themselves.

The revival of Europe as a main centre of power—economic, technological and political-military—will be a hallmark of 21st century world politics. The post-Cold War political system will rest on five big pillars and a row of smaller ones. The big five are the US, the USSR, Europe, Japan and the UN. Among the smaller

Azerbaijanis burn their communist party membership cards at a rally organised by the Popular Front

TASS

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ones will be China, India, Brazil.

In the USSR, there will be no turning back from *perestroika*. Nor can it halt where it has arrived after three years of Gorbachevian reforms. The emerging political order is already sketched on the horizon. A federation of equal republics, replacing a forced union of submissive units. Each republic given the right to secede—real right, instead of the 70-year-old fiction. The right, however, will probably not be used except by the three Baltic republics, that too not without institutionalised close ties to the Soviet federation. The USSR will be a multi-party state. Within the CPSU, each republican party will be independent.

THE communists may not rule in all republics. But the CPSU will be in power at the federal level, co-opting some democratic factions. The new political order will emerge around 1995, with Gorbachev still at its helm. The blunt reality is that there is no one in the CPSU who can replace him. His great achievement is that he has been able to line up the entire western world in defence of *perestroika*. This no other Soviet leader can.

Considering the problems he faced, Gorbachev hasn't done that poorly. He believes *perestroika* has begun to work. Unrest in the Baltic republics has been contained, at least until the fall when the CPSU Congress will draw up a charter for federation. Also a federal CPSU linking independent parties in the republics. The use of the military to suppress the nationalist movement in Azerbaijan will subdue similar movements elsewhere.

No one in the Soviet Communist Party can replace Gorbachev. His great achievement is that he has been able to line up the entire western world in defence of *perestroika*.

If Gorbachev is conservative on the economic front, it is partly because he wants first to build the political framework for a market-minded socialist economy, and partly because there are few takers in the USSR for entrepreneurship. Seventy years of centrally administered socialism will take at least 10 years of bumpy flight to land on solid, viable social-democratic ground. Gorbachev will try his best to keep communism afloat, but the political economy at century-end will take on clear aspects of social democracy.

Meanwhile, Gorbachev will continue to be seen as master builder of the world after the Cold War. The tumult of change in the USSR and Eastern Europe will inevitably administer jolts and shocks to many a political society. The cry of independence raised by tens of ethno-political groups will reverberate on multi-ethnic nations of Asia and Africa. The democratic upsurge will heat up our political systems. India will have to adjust to a market-minded Soviet state with which it will continue to have a high level of economic and political cooperation. Adjustment will not be that hard because the Soviets will help. They care as much for the close relationship as we do. As the world moves to the edge of the 21st century, no nation will be closer to the Soviet Union than India with the sole probable exception of the US.

Crowds of Azerbaijani activists block Soviet Army tanks in Khanlar

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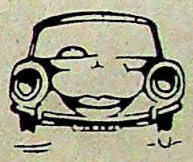

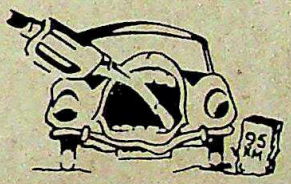

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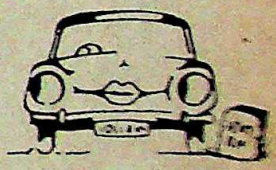

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INDO-PAK RELATIONS

Turning Bitter

Foreign Ministers Yakub Khan and Gujral talk tough

OF late, a warm breeze had begun to thaw the cold war between India and Pakistan. The two countries had signed a cultural agreement last July. Tourist groups were allowed to criss-cross the borders even without reporting to the police stations as was the rule. And early last month, Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's special envoy Abdus Sattar came to India with an olive branch.

But suddenly last fortnight, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan arrived dabbed with war-paint and changed it all. What should have been a farewell to arms almost turned into a call to arms over the deteriorating situation in Kashmir. The Pakistan foreign minister came to New Delhi ostensibly to talk about SAARC. But Khan and his counterpart, I.K. Gujral, set aside diplomatic niceties in favour of blunt and bitter truths. Gujral warned Khan that Pakistan should not "get taken in by our apparent soft touch" and that Kashmir would remain "an integral part of India at any cost". Khan in turn told Gujral that Pakistan had to uphold the right to "self-determination" of the people of Kashmir. And Pakistan seemed set to internationalise the issue.

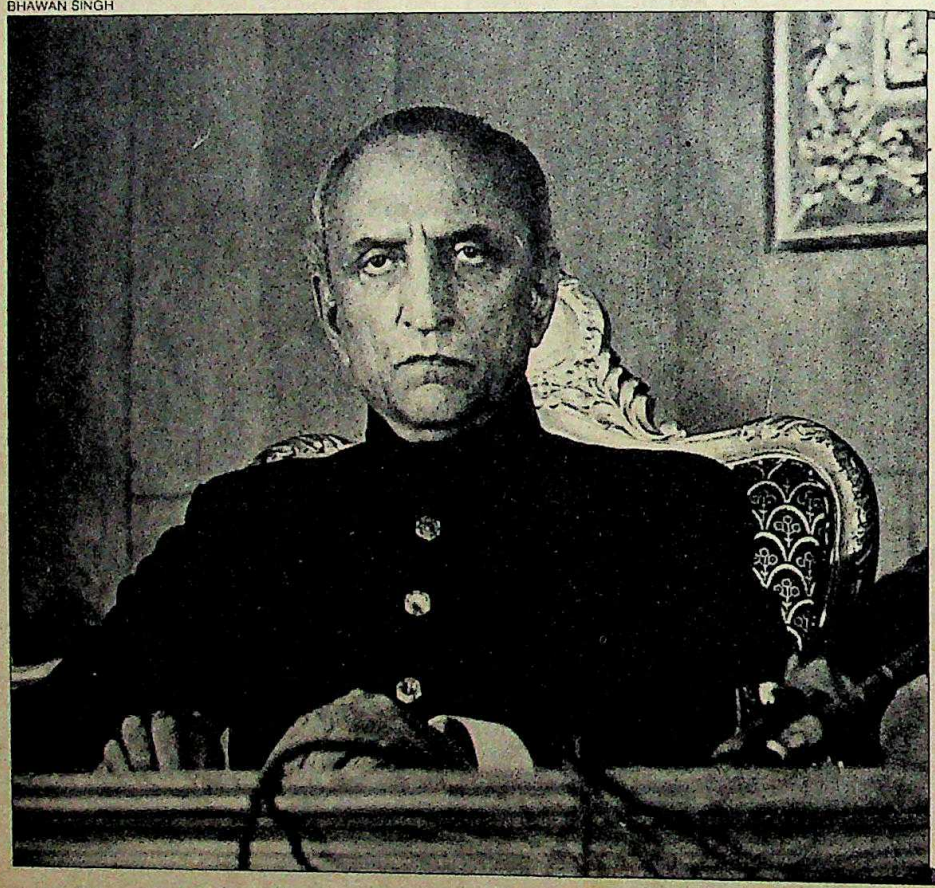
The alarm went off. Newspapers screamed about Pakistan's role in setting the valley afire and applauded Gujral for getting tough with Khan. Some in the Opposition, however, felt he had not been tough enough. "Had Rajiv Gandhi and I been in office Yakub would have politely been told to pack his bags and leave," Natwar Singh, former minister of state for external affairs told INDIA TODAY. "He should never have been allowed to even discuss Kashmir."

The signal from Islamabad was clear. It was sliding away from the Shimla Agreement which had acted as a safety valve since 1972. And on the eve of Republic Day an all-party meeting—including the Congress(I) which had boycotted the meet on Punjab—unanimously passed a resolution stating that any infringement on Kashmir would be resisted.

The scene for the locking of horns had been set before Khan's arrival in New Delhi. It was Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's statement on January 20—on the eve of her foreign minister's departure for India—that the disturbances in Kashmir were of "grave concern" to the "entire Muslim *ummah* (nation)"—that first alerted New Delhi. Bhutto also announced that a joint session of parliament would be held early February to discuss the "deteriorating situation" in Kashmir. The announcement by Mohamad Abdul Qayyam, president of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, that 10,000 commandos would cross the line of control to liberate Kashmir did not help matters either.

During the two-hour first tete-a-tete on January 22 Khan told Gujral, his old friend during their Moscow days, that the "sentiments" of the people in Pakistan had been aroused a great deal over what had been happening in Kashmir. "He wanted to tell us in plain words that Kashmir was not a closed issue but a

BHAWAN SINGH



Pakistan Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan

It was Khan's vocabulary, especially his use of the word "perilous" when referring to the Kashmir situation and its "consequences" that angered his counterpart. "I went with a bouquet of flowers. I returned with a basket of thorns," Khan said after returning to Pakistan.

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disputed area. They are trying to back out of the methodology prescribed in the Shimla Agreement and internationalise the issue," says a senior diplomat.

It was Khan's vocabulary, especially his use of the word "perilous" in the context of the prevailing circumstances in Kashmir and its "consequences" that imagered Gujral. "When the Pakistan foreign minister says that he does not want to do another 1965 what else can a diplomat register but a threat," says a bureaucrat.

Khan, it was soon obvious, was itching for a scrap. "The border is very porous" he commented on Qayyam's announcement about liberating Kashmir with commandos based in Pakistan.

Later that evening the two foreign ministers met alone and talked, after dinner, for over two hours until 1 a.m. in the book-lined study in the Pakistan Ambassador's house, where Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali had often met. Khan made it clear that he was conveying what he had been asked to after a high level meeting in Islamabad and that it was getting to be "like a Greek tragedy".

If that was the case, it was evidently Pakistan which was scripting it. Naturally there was criticism in Pakistan too. "Kashmir is like a fish-hook in Pakistan's heart because truth is repeatedly defeated by the mythology of nationalism," said The Frontier Post. And sure enough Gujral apprised Khan about the reports of intelligence agencies regarding weapons coming into Kashmir from Pakistan. He reminded Khan that Pakistani generals had in the past "underestimated India's resilience," and that "we always rallied round in the hour of crisis". For India, Kashmir was a law and order situation.

WAR noises and the rites of diplomacy over, the two got down to the business of how to make peace. According to Pakistani diplomatic sources Khan said that Pakistan did not want war because they were wiser after their previous experiences. But he felt that, their irresolvable differences over Kashmir notwithstanding, the two countries should carry on meeting and keep the lines of communication open to avoid any misunderstandings. The hot lines between their respective foreign secretaries and divisional military officers often crackled with bonhomie—even while Zarb-e-Momin, the massive military exercise was on.

Khan even suggested that the two countries ought not to let what was happening in Kashmir dictate the course of Indo-Pak relations. The series of joint commission meetings between secretaries have not yet been cancelled.

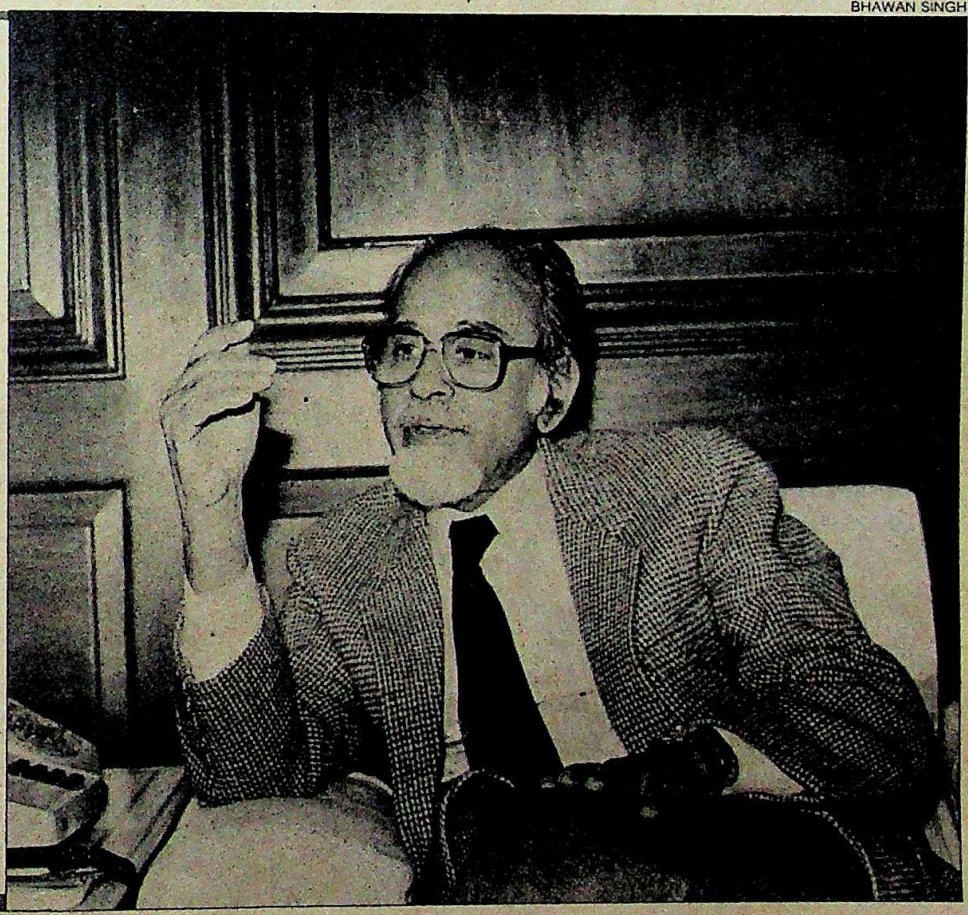
What obviously is being watched with keen interest is the buildup to March 20, when the crucial amendment to the Pakistan Constitution—passed during Zia-ul-Haq's time—which allows the President to nominate the prime minister, lapses. Bhutto might, after all, be playing to the fundamentalist gallery till then, to ward off such constitutional threats to her government till the ides of March passes her.

Rajiv Gandhi has criticised the National Front for its weak-kneed response to Pakistan on Kashmir. And BJP leader and former foreign minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee in a strong statement made at the "Save Kashmir Day" organised by his party on January 27 said that Pakistan was preparing for another war with India and urged the present Government to face the challenge with an "iron hand". Neither India nor Pakistan can really afford a war at the moment. But according to an army general India has decided "to keep its powder dry along its border with Pakistan".

But after all the stinging prose both the foreign ministers resorted to the poetry of Faiz at the banquet hosted by Gujral. Khan quoted couplets about having lost the nerve to pursue the quest for love. Gujral chose the verse which said that one did not believe in a god but if a prayer to him could help, why not.

It seems it is now up to the gods. And back home, Khan said: "I went with a bouquet of flowers. I returned with a basket of thorns." —MADHU JAIN

BHAWAN SINGH



India's Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral

Gujral apprised Khan about intelligence reports of weapons coming into Kashmir from Pakistan, that Pakistani generals in the past had made the mistake of "underestimating India's resilience" and that what is happening in Kashmir is not an uprising but a law and order situation.

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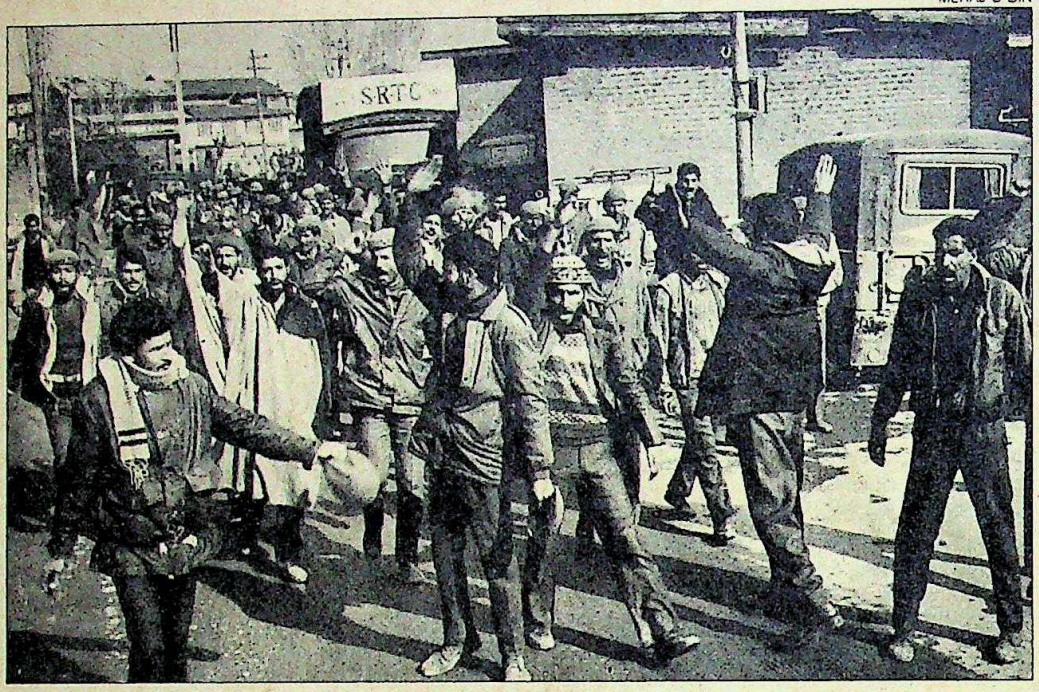
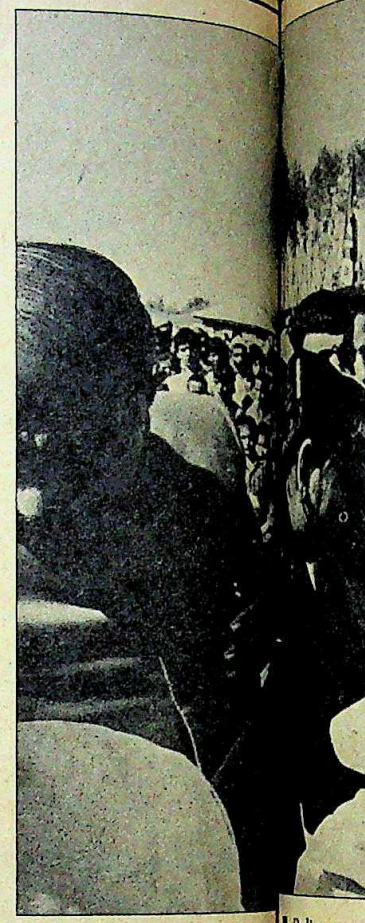
MERAJ-U-DIN





JAMMU & KASHMIR

A Formidable Challenge

Jagmohan takes charge in an extremely difficult situation

"I will function like an orderly, a nursing orderly, to help the patient with love, compassion and service to regain his health."
—Jagmohan on January 21

LITTLE did Jagmohan know as he uttered these words before a hurried swearing-in ceremony at Jammu's Raj Bhawan what was in store for him. Forces inimical to his second term as governor were putting the finishing touches on a campaign designed to discredit him in the eyes of the very people whose abiding affection he seemed to have won before relinquishing office in July last year.

With Kashmir on fire, the new Government at the Centre had turned, once again, to Jagmohan to put the embers out. In Jammu, people danced on the streets to celebrate his appointment. And in Srinagar's Lal Chowk area, shopkeepers for the first time defied militants to open their establishments.

But the euphoria was short-lived.

The next day the valley erupted as never before. Even before Jagmohan could reach Srinagar from the winter capital of Jammu, hundreds of police and paramilitary forces fanned out into downtown ghettos and conducted brutal house-to-house searches, smashing electronic items, insulting women and children by parading them in the cold.

The operation was planned by police and intelligence officials close to the Farooq Abdullah-Congress(I) combine without the knowledge of the new governor. But the people could not know this. Spokesmen for the discredited Farooq regime as well as pamphleteers from various terrorist organisations—as if in tandem—spread the word that the police action had been ordered by Jagmohan.

The affection for him, overnight, began to turn to revulsion as people poured out into the streets to defy curfew orders. In several places, the army had to be called out. And once more, the shooting started, leaving daily trails of dead and wounded.

Remarked a lawyer from Srinagar: "When Jagmohan's name was announced, there was both happiness and fear. Happiness among people that justice would be done, and fear among politicians and extremists that he would act firmly against them. Today, those who were happy are afraid again—of the security forces and the extremists."

The 'nursing orderly' soon discovered that he would have to play the role of a surgeon. The immediate operation would be to try and turn the propaganda around while containing terrorists. The long-term surgery: to cauterise the festering wounds of corruption and ineptitude inflicted on the state by the outgoing National Conference-Congress(I) coalition government. Jagmohan's inheritance was not the legacy he had left behind after governor's rule last time—a competent and corruption-free administration—but a hostile and demoralised bureaucracy, a local police force infiltrated by elements of doubtful loyality, and a host of confident secessionist organisations.

Farooq, desperately wanting to pass the buck for his dismal failure, quickly resigned from the chief ministership saying he had not been consulted by the Centre on Jagmohan's appointment. So the governor had to begin his task alone, without the convenience of a temporary shock absorber.

He started his first day in office with 35 dead in police firings and over 400 arrested. During his first week in office about 90 people including over a dozen defence and police officials fell to bullets. Worse, Jammu & Kashmir policemen grew restive after rumours spread that one of them had been shot by CRPF men.

His first victory came on January 26, Republic Day. Secessionists had planned to declare an Independent Islamic Republic of Kashmir that day, with a pledge of support from Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. The militants had also invited the foreign media to witness the unfurling of a new flag. Major disruptions were planned. But the day passed off with-

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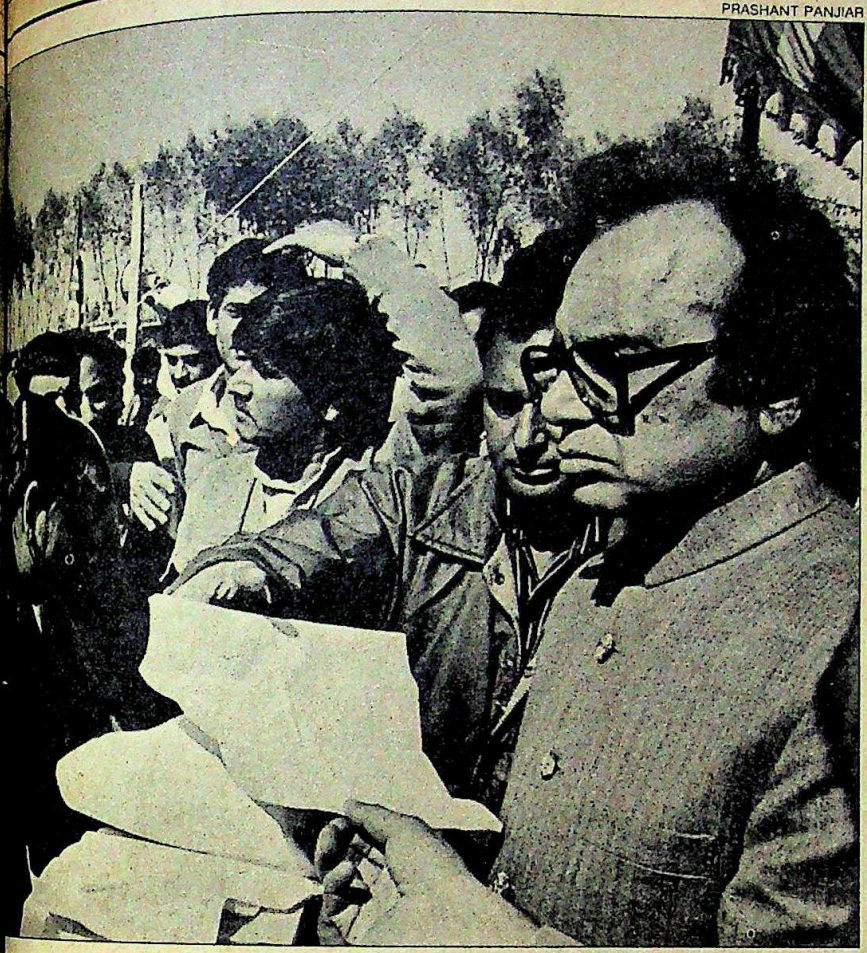
PRASHANT PANJIAR



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Policemen protesting in Srinagar; and (above) Jagmohan receiving petitions from the public: crucial role

ment—largely due to round-the-clock crisis management by Ved Marwah and Qameel Quereshi, two IPS officers whom Jagmohan inducted as advisers.

But Jagmohan's troubles were not confined to his state. In a desperate bid to play the Kashmir card for the forthcoming Assembly elections, the Congress(I) decided to make Jagmohan the political scapegoat. The first salvo was fired by Rajiv Gandhi: "Despite the opposition by Farooq Abdullah, the governor was thrust upon him." The hypocrisy of this statement was not lost on those who remembered that Rajiv had urged Jagmohan to run from South Delhi for the Lok Sabha elections because of his exceptional record as an administrator.

That the Congress(I) was hellbent on trying to pin the responsibility for the valley's woes on Jagmohan became evident when partymen close to Rajiv spread the word that he was appointed on the specific recommendation of RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras. They also made the ludicrous charge that because he had carried out development work at the Vaishno Devi shrine, he was a Hindu communalist.

But such charges could not alter history or current reality. The bulk of intelligence reports and political analyses received by the former Congress(I) government squarely blamed Farooq for the administrative collapse in the valley. The proof lies in simple facts and figures. During 1989, Farooq spent no more than 40 days in Srinagar. And what of his cabinet? It met for no more than a dozen sessions to devise strategy for dealing with the crisis.

As tourism, the valley's major source of income, declined by 30 per cent, the average Kashmiri was left with Rs 5,000 less to spend on his personal consumption. It was not surprising then that more and more people turned to the gun.

Jagmohan's most remarkable success during his first term—when the state saw development programmes delivering the goods as never before—was weaning people away from fundamentalists and bringing radical politicians into the mainstream. Once again, in order to demonstrate that the well-being of all Kashmiris is his goal, Jagmohan has begun to spread the word through radio and TV that he does not view the valley's troubles as a law-and-order problem but a symptom of economic, social and political distress.

One of his first acts was to announce a scheme creating 9,000 jobs for Kashmiri youth in the BSF and a programme to fill 3,000 teachers' vacancies within a month. On the law-and-order front, he ordered the release of most of the people illegally detained during the January 20 searches as well as immediate compensation ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh for innocent victims of terrorist or police violence. He also declared that while he would be personally available to talk to anyone with a legitimate grievance, he would spare no effort to arrest perpetrators of violence.

Jagmohan's second term as governor is a far more daunting assignment than his first. Moderate leaders have become irrelevant. Bureaucrats are now reluctant to help him because of fear of militants. And Pakistan has begun making threatening noises.

Right now, even as the militants flaunt their guns, Jagmohan answers them not just with more guns but also with bread and butter. And the promise of justice. His crucial test in these early days will be to try and rekindle some of the goodwill that the people of the valley bore towards him. For the restoration of trust, common sense and rational judgement are the absolute preconditions of any solution. —PRABHU CHAWLA

Marwah (right); and Quereshi: firefighting

Republic Day was peaceful, thanks to crisis-management by Marwah and Quereshi, Jagmohan's new advisers.

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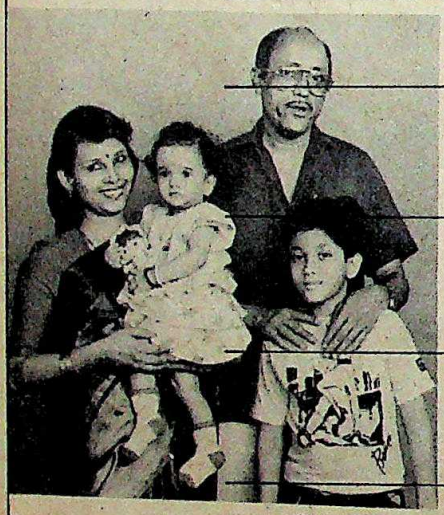
Of course. Plastics. Why on earth didn't I think of it before	Of course, after the number of times I said it, why didn't he
Now where can I find out more about this sunrise industry	



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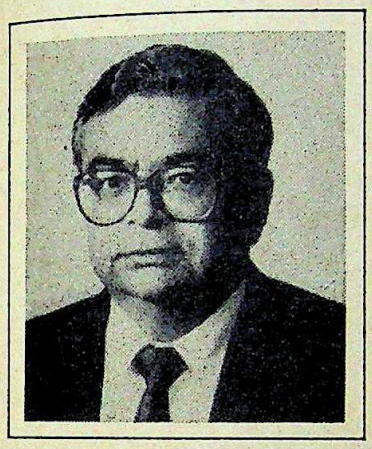
Garware Paints Ltd.

Regd. Office: 401, Marine Chambers, S. V. Thackersey Marg, Bombay 400 020.

STATEMENT OF SHRI C. B. GARWARE, CHAIRMAN, GARWARE PAINTS LIMITED, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY ON 27TH DECEMBER,1989.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you to the fifty-second Annual General Meeting of your Company.

As you are aware, Shri B. D. Garware resigned from the Board, and as Chairman of the Company, last year, and has kindly agreed to be Chairman-Emeritus of the Company. His valuable guidance and advice continues to be available to us in the conduct of our business.

During the year, Shri V. Isvaran, one of our senior Directors, resigned from our Board. Shri Isvaran joined our Board on 1st August,1966 and was also the Vice-Chairman of the Company for some time. During his long association with this Company, Shri Isvaran has rendered very valuable services to this Company. The Board of Directors would like to record their appreciation of the services rendered by Shri Isvaran during his tenure as a Director of this Company and wish him a peaceful, retired life.

I would now like to introduce you to my two sons, Jaideep and Nihal, who have been appointed Additional Directors on our Board during the year. Shri Jaideep Garware was appointed Executive Wholetime Director of the Company for a period of five years, commencing 22nd November, 1989. Your approval is in fact being sought at this meeting for this appointment. I take pleasure in mentioning that both my sons have been educated in England and the U.S.A.

I also wish to introduce you to Shri Pradeep Shroff, a well known business consultant, who was appointed an Additional Director on our Board during the year. Shri Shroff is the Managing Director of M/s. V. B. Desai Industries Ltd., (formerly M/s. V. B. Desai Financial Services Ltd.) and is on the Boards of several prominent companies. Your Directors are confident that, with his professional knowledge and vast experience, Shri Shroff will be of immense help to this Company as a Director.

The audited Statements of Account for the year ended 31st March,1989, together with the Auditors' and Directors' Reports thereon, have been with you for some time now, and with your permission, I will take them as read. You will observe that the financial year of the Company was changed from 30th June to 31st March in conformity with the financial year stipulated under the amended Income Tax Act. The Accounts sent to you accordingly relate to the 9 months from 1st July,1988 to 31st March,1989.

SALES AND PROFITS

Sales for the 9 month period ended 31st March, 1989, were Rs. 41.56 crores. On an annualised basis, this works out to an increase of 9% over the previous year's turnover. Similarly, the Profit before Tax of Rs. 51.70 lakhs, on an annualised basis, showed an increase of 10% over the previous year. Despite the steep increase in prices of raw materials and other overheads, we have been able to achieve better profitability by changing our product-mix.

DIVIDEND

Your Directors take pleasure in proposing a Dividend of 12%,which works out to 16% – one per cent more than the previous year – on an annualised basis. I am sure you will consider this satisfactory.

CURRENT YEAR

We have had a good monsoon and the prospects for the current year appear to be reasonably good. Our performance at the half-year stage, that is, as at the end of September, 1989, showed that our sales were up by 30% and the profits were better than those for the corresponding previous half-year.

DIVERSIFICATION

As you are aware, we have been considering various diversification projects, and in September this year we set up the GARWARE SUPERMARKET at Bhulabhai Desai Road, Bombay. This Supermarket, run on the lines of such stores operating in the West, was started by a team of young and enthusiastic executives headed by Shri Jaideep Garware.

Another enterprise which we propose to set up is GARWARE COVEMA LTD.,to undertake the business of manufacturing plastic processing machinery and components.

We have also entered into technical collaboration with Becker Industrifarg AB, Märsta, Sweden, for manufacture of coil coatings. The coil coated steel sheets are meant for different end-user segments like construction, furniture, domestic appliances and automotives,etc. Precoating of steel sheets is a new concept in our country and is expected to develop rapidly in the next three years.

There are also, other projects which are under active consideration by our Projects Department.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Board of Directors,I wish to place on record our deep appreciation of the sincere work of our employees at all levels. I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our bankers, financial institutions, shareholders,our business associates and customers,for their support, co-operation and patronage.

Thank you.

C. B. GARWARE
Chairman

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings at the Annual General Meeting.

CHAITRA-B P124 A

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GOVERNORS

A Mass Exit

Removals raise questions

GOVERNORS are supposed to live in the cocooned ivory tower comfort of their regal mansions rather than in the glare of controversial publicity. But last fortnight they found themselves bathed in a discomforting limelight. In a move unparalleled in the history of independent India, President R. Venkataraman sent a one-page missive through a special messenger to all governors asking for their resignations.

All the 22 appointees of the previous regime did so without demur within 48 hours. But the move raised troublesome constitutional questions with which the National Front Government has been unable to deal with conviction. That a crisis was at hand was evident when even two weeks after the mass dumping of the constitutional heads of state governments, Prime Minister V.P. Singh was unable to find replacements.

It was not hard to fathom why. Potential candidates for the job—men and women of public stature and integrity, notwithstanding their political views—could hardly be expected to accept gubernatorial assignments under the radically altered rules of the game. For the new government policy, if indeed it was that, seemed to indicate that governors can be summarily booted out without having completed their tenures. Another reason for the delay in new appointments was that under the circumstances, many candidates seeking the governors' vacant berths were crass political job seekers. And the prime minister could hardly accede to their demands because, as his government had indicated, the wholesale sackings were intended to depoliticise the posts by replacing partisan governors with disinterested men and women of stature.

Predictably, the Congress(I) condemned the action as a politically-motivated prelude to foisting pro-Janata Dal governors on the states on the eve of assembly elections. But the ruling party continued to insist that it acted only out of a desire for fundamental reform. Janata Dal General Secretary Jaipal Reddy explained: "The governors instead of playing a role of healthy link between the state and the Centre were becoming pawns at the hands of politicians and some of them had brought disrepute to the office itself."

In the past, new governments at the Centre have made changes in the state Raj Bhavans. But never so precipitate or wholesale. And the ruling party's compulsions were not entirely those explained by its spokesmen. One reason why the Government acted as it did was that it failed to secure the resignations of selected governors it had targeted for removal. One example was Sikkim Governor and former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar whose continuance in office would have proven embarrassing in the light of his coming under CBI scrutiny for his role in the Bofors scandal. Also, Akali Dal leader S.S. Mann had accused Haryana Governor and former IB director H.A. Barari of having given direct orders for his torture when he was in judicial custody. The Government had also begun investigating this charge with absolute seriousness.

S.K. Bhatnagar

VIJAYA

H.A. Barari

The continuance of Bhatnagar and Barari in office would have proven embarrassing for the new Government.

The prime minister had in fact specifically instructed Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed that governors and other appointed officials with records of apolitical service should be left alone. But even within the Cabinet, this policy had its detractors—among them Commerce Minister Arun Nehru. They wanted a clean sweep starting with the Raj Bhavans. They argued that if the Government was selective it would face the charge of conducting political pogroms and would have to justify its conduct on a tedious case-by-case basis.

What seemed to clinch the issue was the nomination by Maharashtra Governor K. Brahmanand Reddy, of 12 members recommended by Chief Minister Sharad Pawar to the Legislative Council. The Janata Dal had opposed the nominations on the ground that assembly elections were due soon and as the Congress(I) could well be driven out of power from the state, the governor should not stack the upper house with its members. And in states like Orissa, Rajasthan and Bihar, governors were signing ordinances and orders under which cash benefits and subsidies worth over Rs 2,000 crore were disbursed to the public as well as acquiescing in the mass transfer of senior officials perceived to be unfriendly to the Congress(I).

The problem appeared intractable. After weeks of discussions within the ruling party as well as meetings between the home minister and the President, the Government consensus favoured mass resignations. Unable or unwilling to give detailed reasons for what was one of the most unprecedented decisions taken by the Indian Government, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed said lamely: "We feel that all the governors should change with the change of government at the Centre. It has been happening in piecemeal fashion but we can give it a try so that we are not accused of favouring or ignoring anybody."

The lack of clarity in the statement showed that he was on weak ground. Under the Constitution, governors are apolitical links between states and the Centre. There is no provision for changing them midstream without charging them with specific misconduct. But the Government has now presented a fait accompli and the constitutional debate is bound to continue. The challenge for V.P. Singh now is to appoint people with impeccable records of national service. Otherwise he will justly be accused of appointing yet another batch of political stooges in total contravention of the declared policy of his own government.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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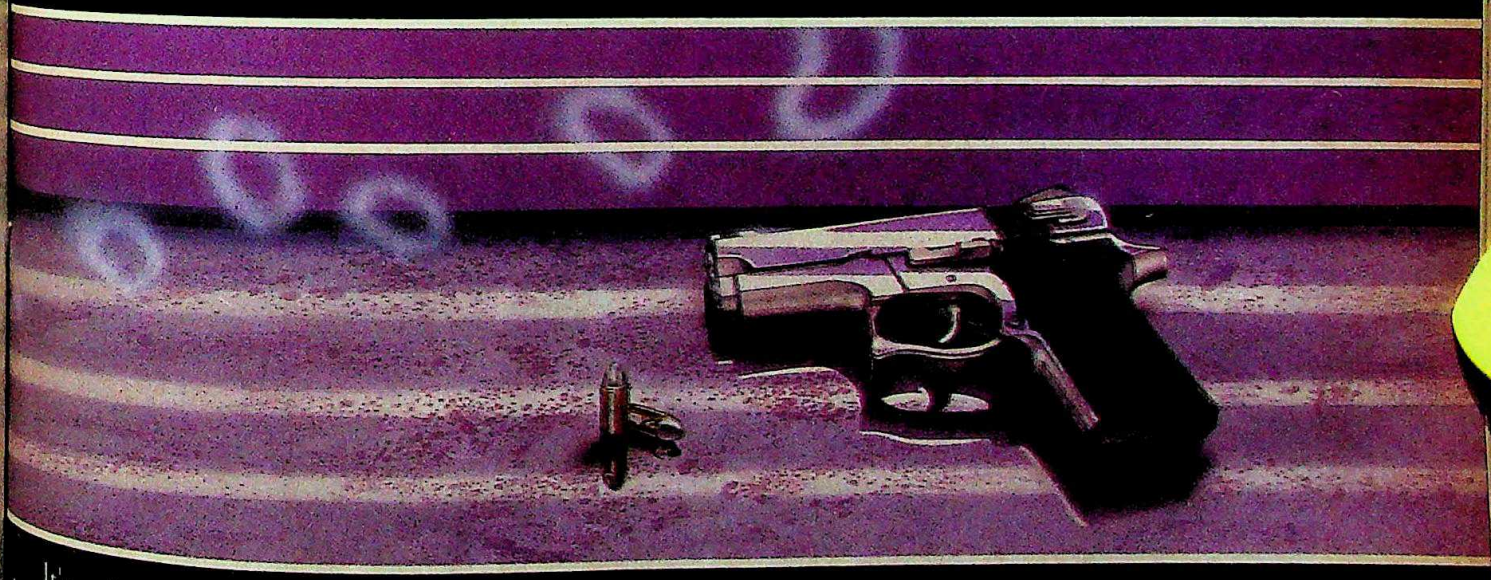
How to kill a Maruti.



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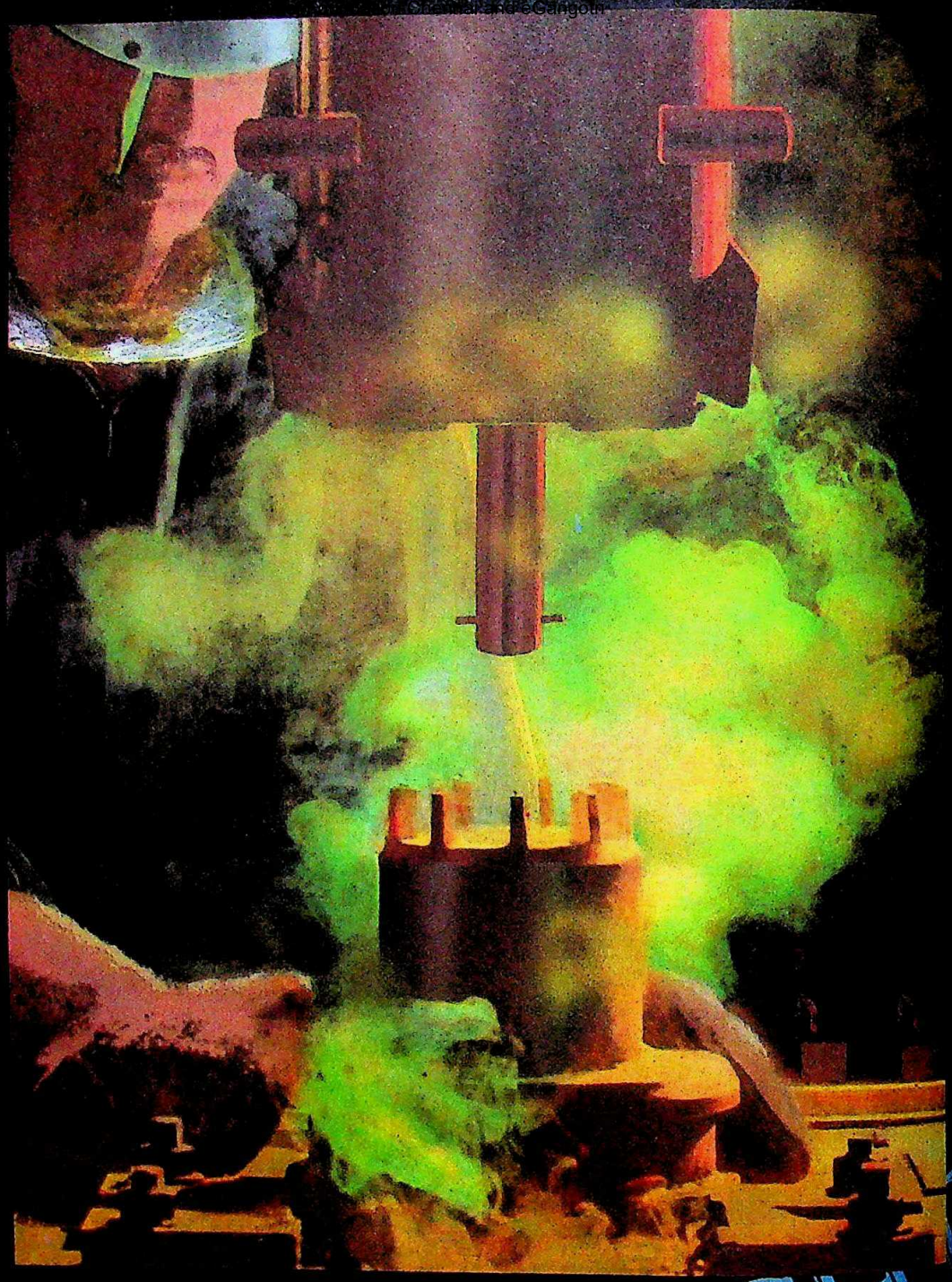

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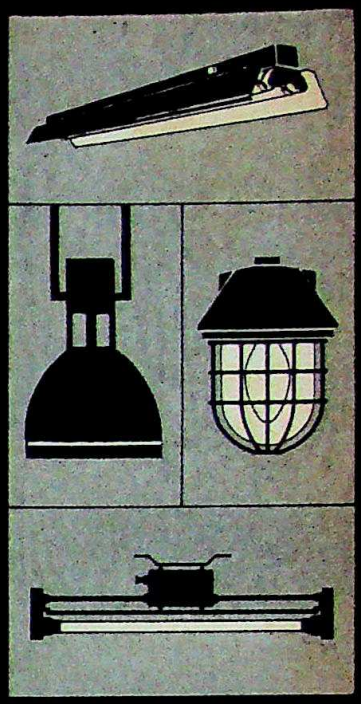

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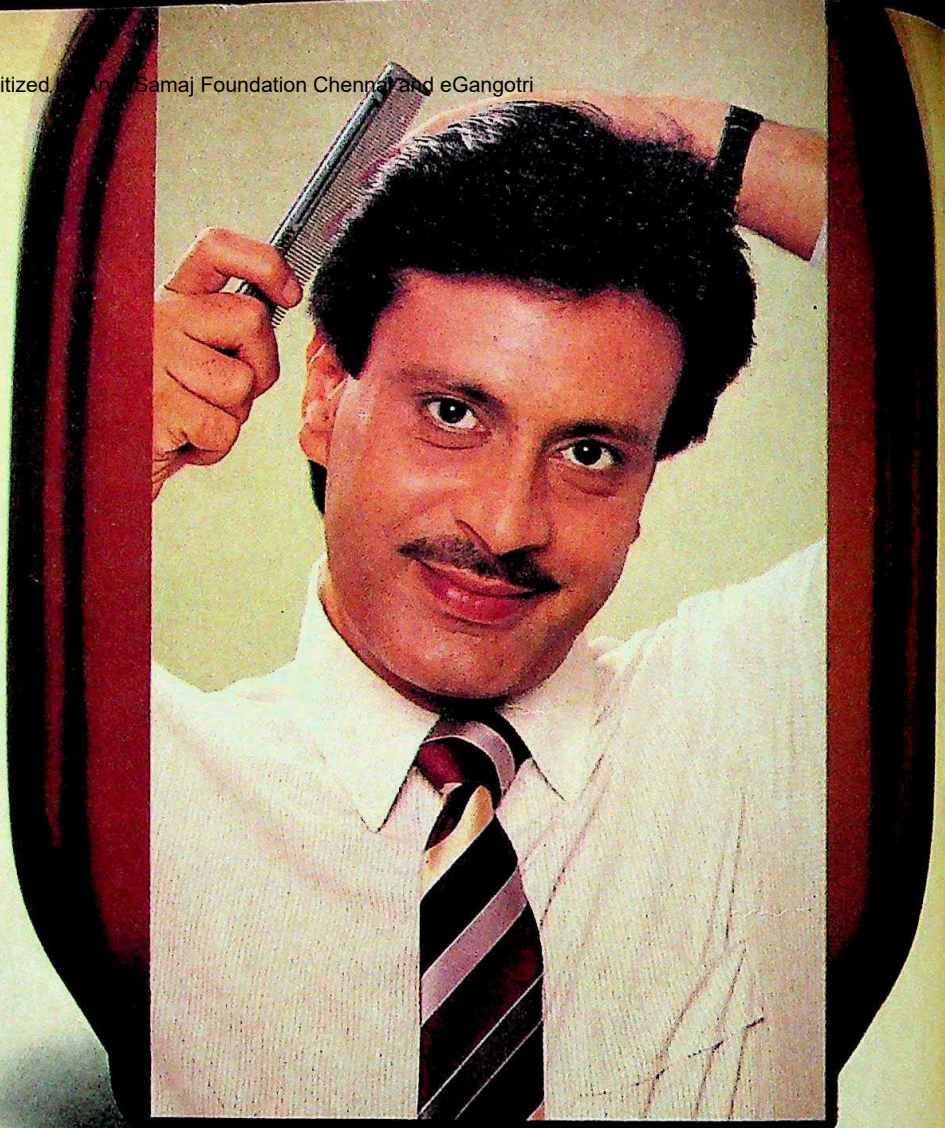

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Protests against the settlement

BHOPAL GAS DISASTER

Unsettling the Verdict

New Government promises a better deal to victims

LIKE Draupadi's sari, the compensation saga just keeps unfolding. It got another twist last fortnight as the new Government announced that it would throw its weight in with the Bhopal gas disaster victims' appeal against the settlement brokered by the Supreme Court last February. Under it, the Rajiv Gandhi government had, on behalf of the victims, accepted $ 470 million (Rs 715 crore) in compensation from Union Carbide, which was freed of all further civil and criminal liability.

The victims cried foul, saying the Government, after declaring itself their captain, had pulled for the other side. They felt let down as captain and judicial umpire negotiated a settlement without telling them what was afoot until the deed was done. Some of them were particularly bitter about the withdrawal of all criminal cases against Carbide officials as part of the deal.

The then opposition had flayed the settlement as a sell-out. Now in power, they were pressed by victims' groups to put their money where their mouths were. That's what they've done. Minister for Law and Justice Dinesh Goswami says: "When we question the settlement, we cannot touch this ($470 million) amount." In fact, he adds, Carbide might well reclaim it. Nevertheless, the Cabinet decided to fork out a substantial interim compensation. "We are working out the amounts and will distribute the compensation very soon," said Petroleum Minister M.S. Gurupadaswamy, whose ministry is handling the payments. The interim compensation could ultimately be deducted from the final settlement, but in the short term, it is for the Government to raise a sum in hundreds of crores.

> The victims are elated at the promise of interim relief and look forward to a fair compensation.

Bhopal was jubilant. "The victims were short-changed for the last five years. It is for the first time that the Government has considered their just demands," said Abdul Jabbar Khan, who leads the powerful Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan. It was partly a triumph of his lobbying. Khan called on Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh on January 10, two days before the announcement. His memorandum included a draft ordinance for interim relief to 1,06,000 families in 36 municipal wards. What particularly pleases the victims is the new Government's view that "criminal liability cannot be taken away".

Said Khan: "I am glad that the Janata Dal has kept its poll promise." The party certainly stands to gain in the Madhya Pradesh assembly elections on February 27. Said state Janata Dal General Secretary Vinay Dixit: "It will help us gain the voters' sympathy not only in Bhopal but also elsewhere in the state."

The victims are not only elated at the promise of an interim relief, they look ahead to a larger settlement. Their petition for a review of last year's settlement has been pending, awaiting a decision on an earlier petition which challenged the Government's right to represent the victims. Parliament had given the Centre that exclusive right in 1985 by an act which prevented any other group from approaching a court directly. On December 22 last, a split bench—three against two—upheld that act.

At the head of that bench was Justice Sabyasachi Mukharji, who became chief justice five days before handing down the judgement. While allowing the Government's exclusive right to represent the Bhopal gas disaster victims, he held that the victims should have been consulted before a settlement was accepted on their behalf. That won him

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The documents should be typed and addressed to the B.D.Goenka Foundation, C/o The Indian Express, No.1 Queen's Road, Bangalore-560 001, or delivered to any office of the Indian Express Group at other centres of publication not later than **February 24, 1990.**

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kudos. What brought the brickbats was his contention that "justice has been done to victims, but justice has not appeared to be done". Though the settlement had not been an issue before his court, Mukharji virtually upheld it by noting the reasons given by the bench which had heard the compensation case. As legal commentator Rajeev Dhawan observed: "The judges appear to have closed ranks."

In the light of Mukharji's views, those who had asked for a review saw little hope of the settlement being set aside. But now that they have such a powerful backer—one of the parties to the settlement—they see a ray of light. Every indication, however, points to a long and winding road to a final judgement.

—DAVID DEVADAS with N.K. SINGH

UNION CARBIDE

Endless Woes

THE Bhopal gas tragedy left trauma and devastation for its survivors. What is less known is the corporate havoc caused by the chemical accident in the offices of Union Carbide in India and the US. Last February, the Supreme Court of India had ordered that Union Carbide pay $470 million (Rs 715 crore) to the Indian Government. But even now, the moral high ground continues to elude the company.

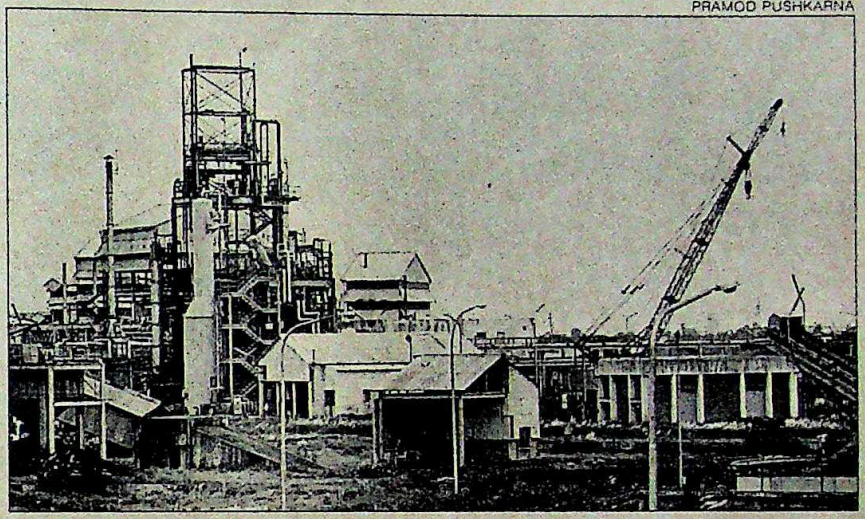
Last year, another US corporate giant, Exxon, had spent $ 1 billion to help clear an oil spill in Alaska even though it caused no deaths. In comparison, Carbide's payment seems to betray a lack of genuine concern. Counters the company's Director of Corporate Communications, Robert Berzog: "That sum was determined—and ordered to be paid—by India's highest court and was promptly complied with."

But, Bhopal definitely was a turning point in Union Carbide's history. Although nobody died in Danbury—Carbide's headquarters—the tragedy made most of its workers nervous about occupational safety. A couple of potentially hazardous accidents at its chemical plant in Virginia intensified the anxiety. Says Berzog: "A sense of remarkable leadership held the company together." In fact, after shedding a lot of assets three years back, the company has recovered financially.

The story of Union Carbide's Indian subsidiary is much worse. The staff was truncated after Bhopal. Eleven of its 12 plant managers at Bhopal in December 1984 were dismissed. The dozen sales managers were also sacked. The research and development wing was closed. And the Bhopal pesticide plant now lies deserted in a morass of weeds and grass.

After the industrial accident, the company's workforce dropped from 9,086 to 6,770. Today, the company—once a blue-chip giant—depends on batteries, flash lights and allied products for about 90 per cent of its sales. But batteries—the company's bread earner—is a product which faces major problems today: low capacity utilisation, high raw material prices and severe competition. V.P. Gokhale, Union Carbide's chairman and managing director, says: "As a company we are not growing at all."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Carbide plant in Bhopal

The Bhopal gas leak disaster has completely marred the once blue-chip company's growth in India.

Even financially, life has been tough. The Supreme Court ordered that the multinational Union Carbide Corporation—which has a 50.5 per cent stake in the Indian company—should pay the Union Government $ 425 million (Rs 646 crore). Union Carbide India Ltd was asked to pay $ 45 million (Rs 69 crore). To raise the money needed, the company was forced to sell the Bombay chemicals and plastics division to Oswal Agro for Rs 58.5 crore. For the balance, it sold off its investment in bonds.

But, approval for the sale of its Bombay plant wasn't granted immediately. So, it took a loan of Rs 51 crore from the State Bank of India (SBI) since the settlement amount had to be deposited in the Supreme Court within a week. The approval came in August last year. But, much before that, in March, the Reserve Bank of India ordered that the sale proceeds from its Bombay unit be placed in fixed deposits until the Bhopal case was resolved. So, an ironical situation has been created with Union Carbide paying an interest of 18 per cent on its Rs 51 crore loan from the SBI even as its own Rs 58.5 crore from the sale of its Bombay unit lies locked in the same bank which is paying it just 4.5 per cent interest on it. Says Gokhale. "We are under tremendous financial pressure."

Though Gokhale says that the morale is still high, it's obvious that the enthusiasm of Carbide's employees will soon run dry. A company official says: "Let the Bhopal issue be resolved. We will then assess the company's ability to move into new areas." But, the spectre of that fateful Bhopal night seems destined to haunt Union Carbide for some time to come.

—S.N. VASUKI in Bombay, with AMRIT KAKARIA in New York

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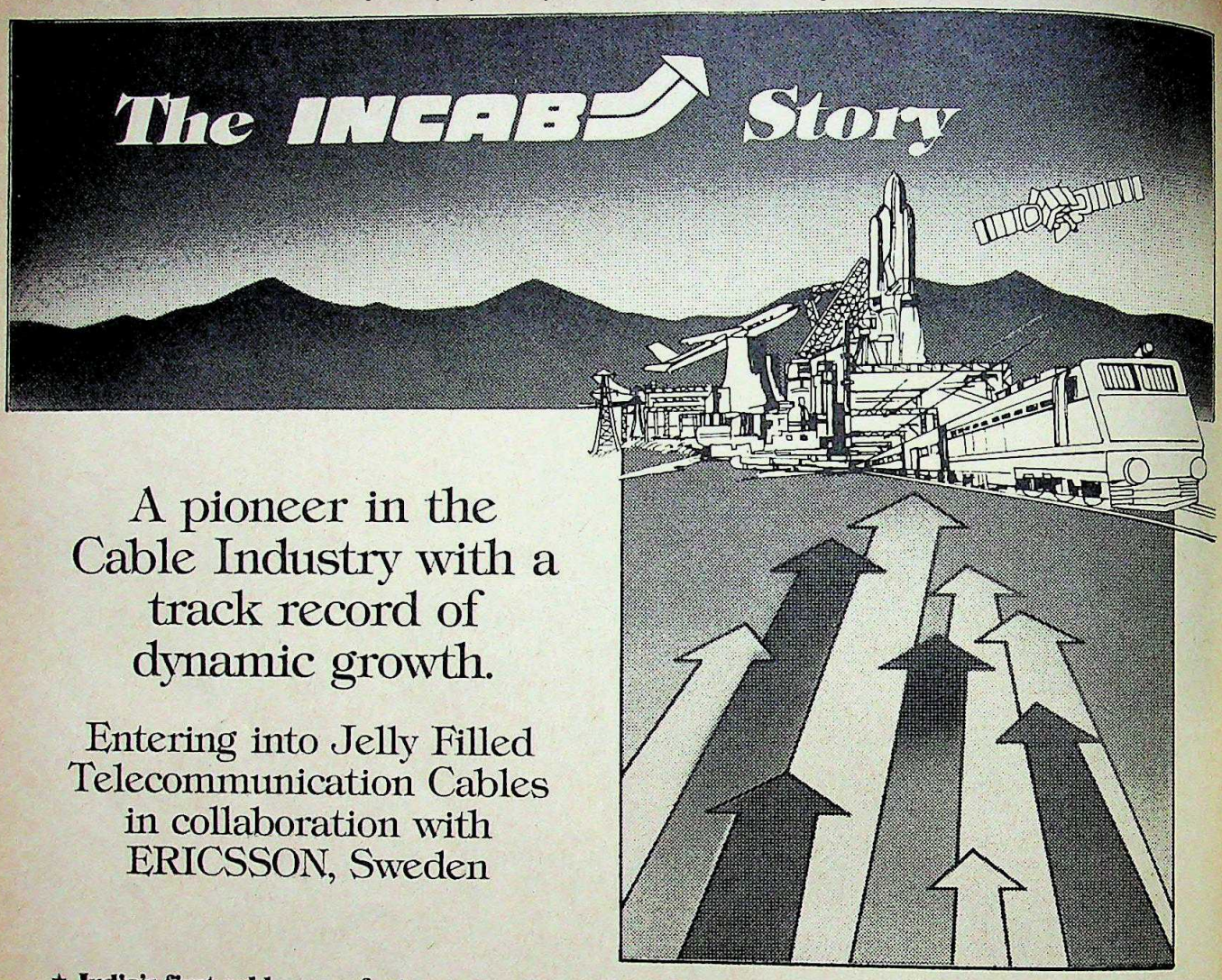

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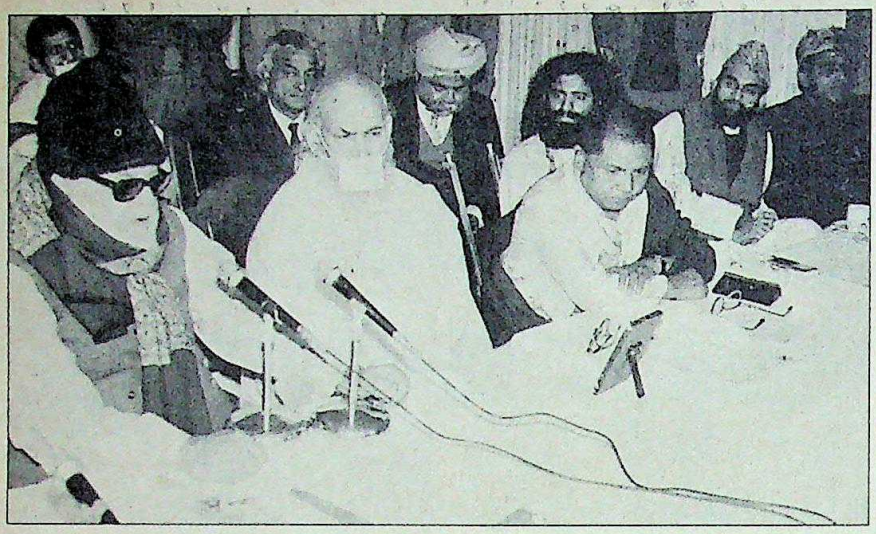


Acharya Muni at a peace meeting

AYODHYA

Rabid Stand

Both sides refuse to yield

WITH less than a month to go for elections to eight state assemblies, the Ayodhya mandir-masjid tangle is again being exploited for all its political worth. Many a meeting has been discussing the dispute and many a statement has been issued. The leading players in the drama continue to be the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Hindu saints, and the Babri Masjid Action Committee. But, bit players have also jumped into the fray.

At the behest of Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, the Jain Acharya Sushil Kumar Muni has formed a peace committee that is likely to achieve little as it does not involve Ram Janmabhoomi activists like the VHP's Ashok Singhal and Mahant Avaidyanath, chief of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti. Meantime, the Shankaracharya of Dwarka has announced that "Ram Janmabhoomi belongs to the Hindus and they should get it". He's also lammed the VHP for not conducting the *shilanyas* according to the scriptures. "On getting the land we shall conduct the *shilanyas* again," he has announced.

The hardline stance was expected to be reiterated at the January 27 meeting of Hindu sadhus at Allahabad. While the Hindu fundamentalists have been digging in their heels, the Centre has moved a petition in court stating that it would not allow any construction till the fate of the pending civil suits was decided. The petition states: "The construction...is subject to all...regulations as per the law of the land." The site plan can be cleared by the civic authorities after the land's title deeds are in the owner's possession—which the VHP does not possess.

Though it took a clear stand in court, the new Government's political stand on the issue still remains vague. V.P. Singh had possibly expected the BJP to convince the VHP and the Bajrang Dal to adopt a soft line. But the BJP was not obliging. Warned Govind Acharya, political secretary to BJP President L.K. Advani: "If there is a confrontation between the Government and the VHP, the BJP's support will be with the VHP." Guman Mal Lodha, a BJP member of Parliament and also the president of the Rajasthan unit of the VHP, believes that "the party will come to power in the states only because of Ram".

With the BJP deciding to toe the VHP line, organisations like the Bajrang Dal are getting bolder. At the Bajrang Dal's national meeting at Delhi last fortnight, speakers warned the Government not to repeat the mistakes of the Congress(I) government. The sadhus even threatened to ditch both the VHP and the BJP if either stalled construction of the temple. Said Sant Ram Chandra Paramhans in Ayodhya: "Leave alone the BJP, even if Lord Ram says, the work of the construction of this temple cannot stop now."

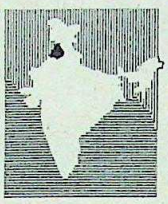
But the Muslims are in an equally uncompromising mood. Says the Delhi Imam's son, Ahmed Bukhari: "We cannot compromise on shifting the mosque. The community will never accept that." With both sides yielding no ground, and the problem not getting top priority on the agenda of the V.P. Singh Government—what with Punjab and Jammu Kashmir—the dispute seems doomed to being on the list of the nation's insoluble problems.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI with DILIP AWASTHI in Ayodhya

PUNJAB

Sudden Strike

Militant leader shot dead



HE was always the one person no one could quite place. He was considered Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's close aide; and yet was suspected to be a government mole after he surrendered during Operation Bluestar. He was reckoned to have turned an approver during his long incarceration; but when he was suddenly released on the eve of the swearing-in of the new Government, he emerged to mouth secessionist speeches.

So when the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) general secretary, Harminder Singh Sandhu, 33, was brutally gunned down in Amritsar last fortnight, no one even knew where to point a finger. The son of a schoolteacher, the academically brilliant Sandhu joined the AISSF in 1978 and along with Amrik Singh, was instrumental in broadening the base of the federation. Later, he acted as Bhindranwale's interpreter. His wife was killed in Operation Bluestar, and he had re-married only last fortnight.

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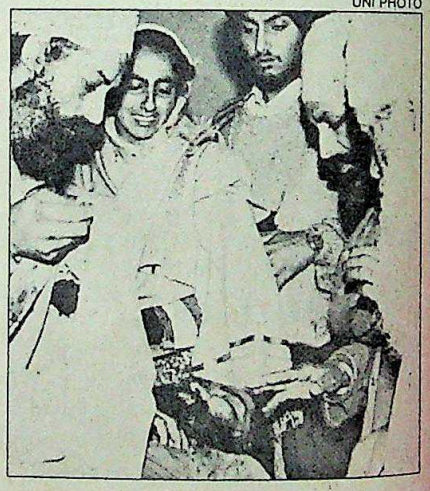

Sandhu's body surrounded by the family

After being released by former governor S.S. Ray he had unequivocally demanded Khalistan—resulting in his being labelled a Congress(I) agent, who was out to sabotage any peace efforts the new Government might undertake. To this he'd said: "Time will tell that we are agents of no one but the Akal Takht." His death will derail the ongoing talks for AISSF unity, and further weaken the Akali Dal (Mann). —KANWAR SANDHU

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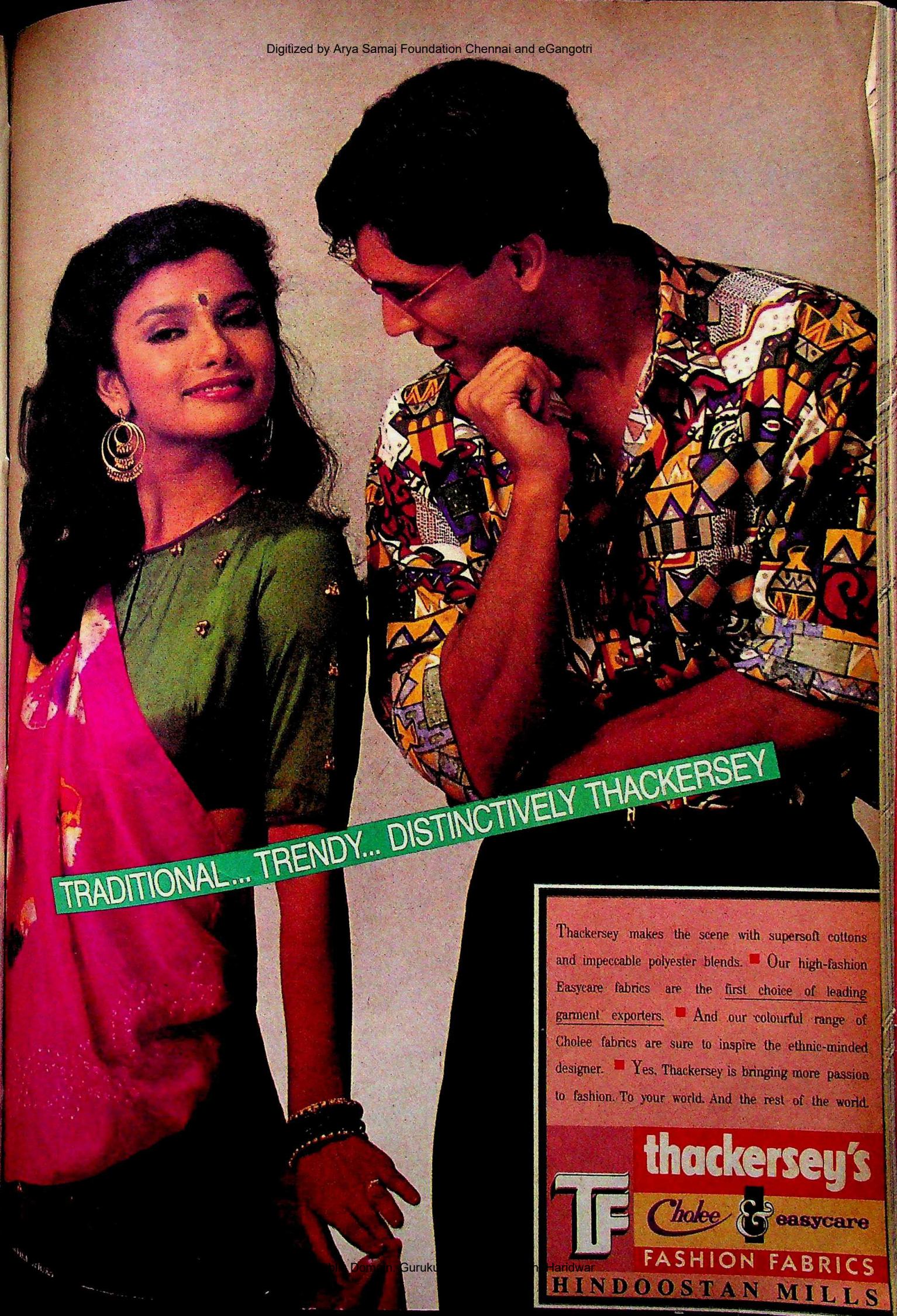

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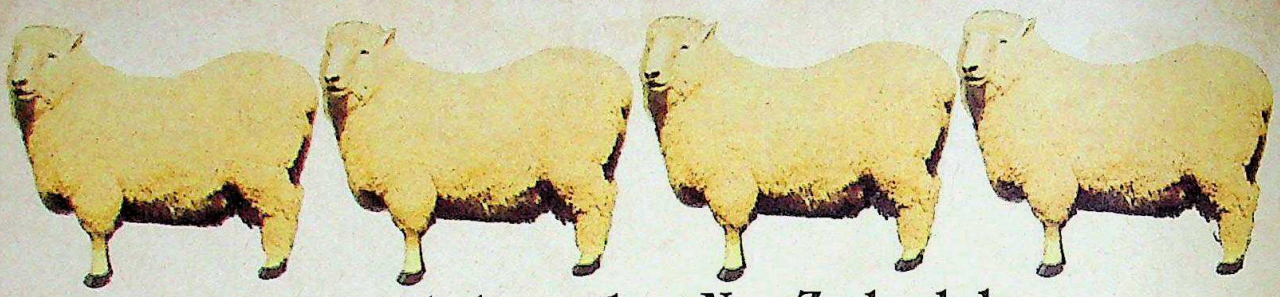

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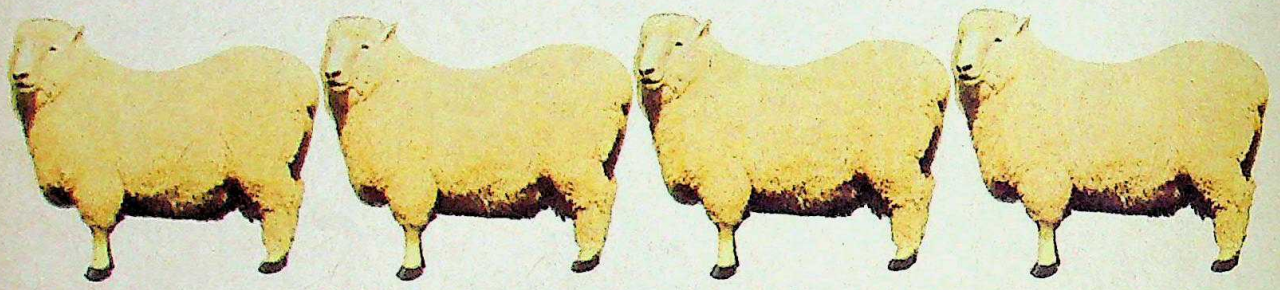

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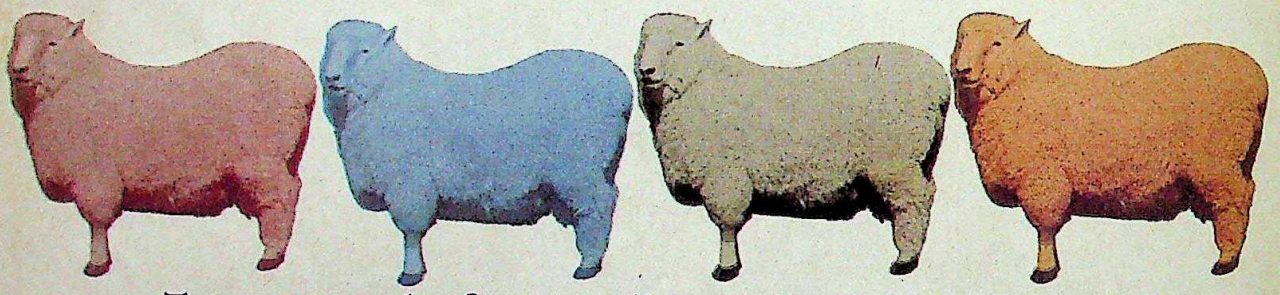

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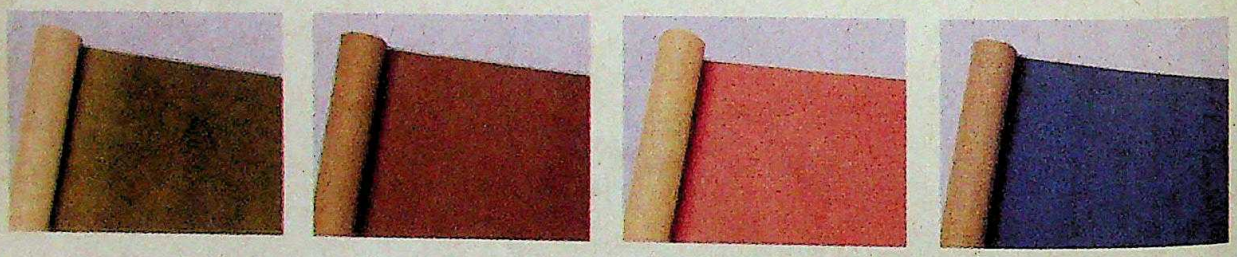

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ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Round Two

Gloom in Congress(I) camp

THE battle lines have been drawn again. Even before the political dust kicked up by the general election has cleared, the polls to the assemblies of eight states and a Union territory have been announced.

But the issues for the February 27 assembly elections are as clouded as the political scenario. Corruption, for instance, cannot be used to nail a party already out of power. Says K.N. Singh, Congress(I) general secretary: "The people have seen through their disinformation campaign." But the non-Congress(I) front is bubbling with confidence. Says V.C. Shukla, Janata Dal leader: "We are sure that non-Congress(I) governments will be formed in the states.

But with the BJP trying to dictate terms during seat adjustment talks it is not all hand-holding between the two partners. "What is the point in having talks? It is because you are not keen to have seat adjustment that you are making such absurd claims," said a Madhya Pradesh BJP leader to the state Janata Dal General Secretary Raghu Thakur's proposal about continuing talks on seat adjustment. A consensus has emerged till now only in Himachal Pradesh where the BJP will contest 51 seats and the Janata Dal 17.

However, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan proved to be the quicksands where the talks got bogged down. "Logically the Janata Dal should not get more than 25 seats in Madhya Pradesh. But we may concede up to 50 seats. Seat adjustment should be on the basis of ground reality," says BJP General Secretary Krishan Lal Sharma. Retorts Shukla: "Nobody should have inflated ideas about his political standing."

In Gujarat, the BJP wants to divide the seats equally with the Janata Dal. But in return for this favour, the party has demanded 100 seats in Bihar. This the Janata Dal might find difficult to agree to.

Many Janata Dal leaders feel that as long as V.P. Singh can bring in the votes, they need not play second fiddle to the BJP.

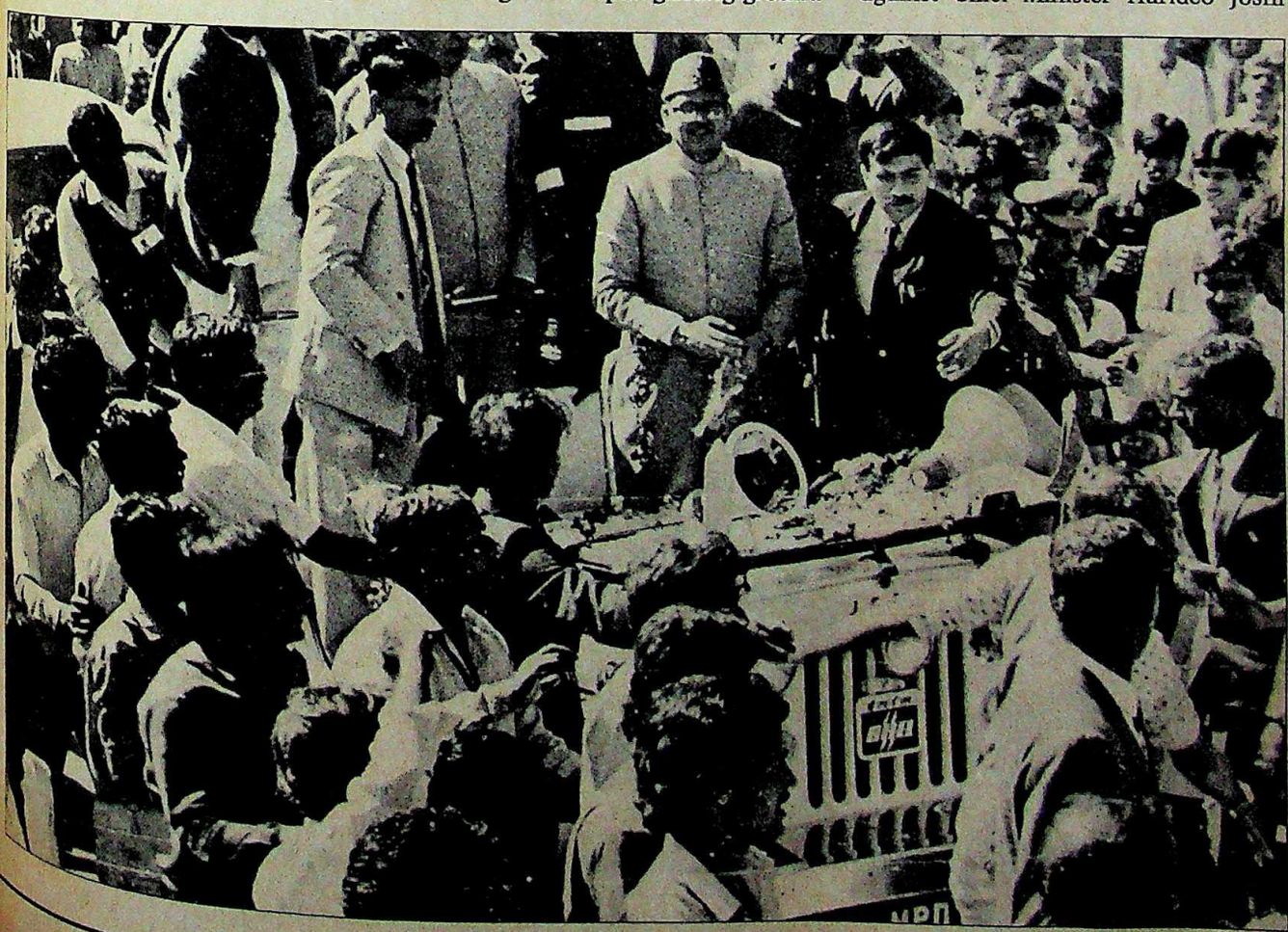
And to test the political waters the Janata Dal units in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan took V.P. Singh on a whirlwind tour of their states and, as expected, drew big crowds. Many Janata Dal leaders feel that as long as V.P. Singh can bring in the votes, they need not play second fiddle to the BJP.

The political climate, anyway, is not in the Congress(I)'s favour. In the February mini-general election, involving 21.3 crore voters and 1,529 assembly seats, indications are that in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa and Himachal Pradesh, the Congress(I) is set for another electoral rout.

There is much indignation within the Congress(I) against the coterie that surrounded Rajiv Gandhi during his prime ministership. Many Congressmen give their ouster a higher priority than the assembly elections. Says Yogendra Jha, a senior Congress(I) leader and former MP: "I suggest Rajiv Gandhi resign from the two positions of party president and parliamentary party leader he is now holding."

Former Rajasthan party unit chief Ashok Gehlot, in fact, staged a putsch against Chief Minister Harideo Joshi

V.P. Singh in Bhopal: gaining ground



R.C. SAHU

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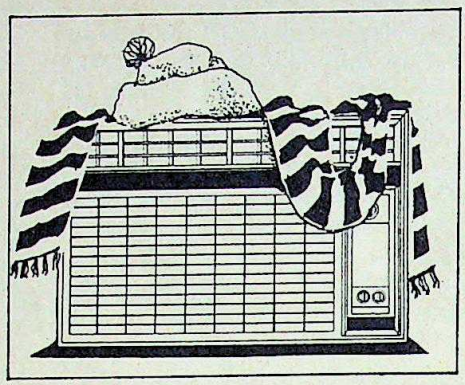

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over the recent appointment of Chandra Raj Singhvi as the chairman of the State Cooperative Housing Finance Society. Gehlot charged that Joshi was promoting the anti-Rajiv elements in the state Congress(I).

Gehlot immediately got his followers in the state cabinet to submit their resignations—which were not accepted—over this issue and rushed to Delhi alleging that Joshi was trying to accommodate his own men and malign Rajiv Gandhi. The veteran chief minister, however, had his way and the stalemate ended without Singhvi being removed. Similarly Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shyama Charan Shukla remarked that the Congress (I) had lost the Lok Sabha elections on national issues implying that state leadership's performance had nothing to do with it.

Not to be outdone Bagun Sumbrui, MP and a protege of Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra, in a letter demanded that Rajiv resign as party president. Instead of taking action against him the central leadership included the tribal leader in the party's state election committee. Not that such outbursts constituted a bid by the state leaders to defy Delhi. Rather they were designed to deflect the public wrath from the state governments before the assembly elections.

The only state where the party's position is better is Maharashtra despite the ever increasing challenge of the BJP-Shiv Sena combine. The Janata Dal with its decision to go it alone has laid the ground for a triangular contest in many of the seats helping the Congress (I). However, there again the party will be fighting the battle more under the leadership of Sharad Pawar than Rajiv Gandhi. Indeed, some state party leaders are wary about the public response to the party president's campaign and want him to make just a token appearance.

But V. P. Singh's ability to invest his government with a coherence and a certain dynamism is sure to enhance the National Front's image. The smooth functioning of the Government so far without major hitches will at least blunt the edge of the Congress(I) charge that a coalition government is incapable of ruling the country. Says Janata Dal spokesman Satyapal Malik: "V.P. Singh comes close to the common man's concept of an ideal leader. Under his leadership no hurdles are insurmountable."

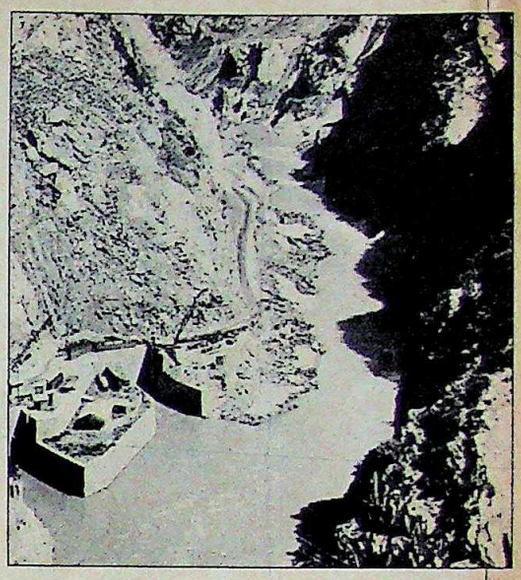
As far as the assembly elections are concerned, the Janata Dal has got a head start with the wind of popular approval behind it. But the hurdles are indeed high.

—BHASKAR ROY

TEHRI DAM

Raging Debate

Project to be re-evaluated



THE project was damned from the word go. Soon after its approval by the Planning Commission in 1972, the 260.5 metre-high Rs 3,000 crore Soviet-aided Tehri dam project in Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttar Pradesh opened the floodgates of controversy.

Environmentalists maintained that it would not only damage once for all the eco-system of the Garhwal ranges, but that the reservoir would soon be rendered useless due to siltation and being a seismic zone the dam would be a constant threat. Technocrats are of the view that water and power from Tehri dam would transform north India.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Maneka, Bahuguna and Singh; and (top) dam site

Last fortnight, even as the bulldozers were moving down parts of the lush green mountainous region, the Centre ordered the work to be stopped as chipko movement leader Sunderlal Bahuguna went on a fast demanding the project be scrapped. After a five-hour meeting convened by Minister of State for Environment and Forests Maneka Gandhi in Delhi, it was decided that work on cleaning the river bed at the dam site would restart. And the Planning Commission will examine the fresh report by the Environmental Appraisal Committee headed by Dr D.R.Bhumbla before the Cabinet considers it. "We have won a small battle but the war is on," said Bahuguna. Retorted Revti Raman Singh Uttar Pradesh minister of environment: "How can the project be stalled when Rs 400 crore has already been spent?"

Much water has flown through the Bhagirathi and Bhilangana rivers—at the confluence of which the dam is being built—since the project was first conceived. The initial estimate was Rs 1,800 crore and the capacity 600 MW. The planned capacity now: 2,400 MW. As the project grew in size so did the controversy.

Even as the debate raged—the Sunil K. Roy committee which studied the ecological impact of the project submitted its report in 1986—the Cabinet approved the project in 1987. The Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti soon moved the Supreme Court which directed the petitioner to get the matter examined by an expert body of the Government. Work on the project, however, continued until Bahuguna went on fast. "Since I found all doors closed I had to resort to the Gandhian way," he said.

Voluminous studies have been made on various aspects of the project apart from the Roy committee report. The Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage has its own evaluation of the project and the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) has also produced an Environment Action Plan. And the Bhumble committee will soon contribute its share.

Both sides are, however, equally confident of victory. "Since the Cabinet approved it earlier, we don't foresee any reversal from the earlier stand," says S.P. Singh chairman THDC. Argues an environmentalist: "How can the earlier approval hold ground when the project has gone through drastic changes?"

However, with the Union Energy Minister Arif Mohamamd Khan and the state Government backing the project, there is little chance of it being scrapped.

—SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

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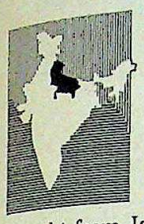
UTTAR PRADESH

Coming Home

Rajiv charms Amethi again



THE long barricades were missing. As were the miles of bunting, the scores of welcome arches and the walls covered with posters. But on his visit to Amethi from January 19 to 20, Rajiv Gandhi discovered something he had missed all through his five years as prime minister—an instant rapport with the electorate. Said Rajiv: "This time I felt much more at ease than in the old days—free and footloose almost."

One reason was, of course, the conspicuous absence of the stifling security that had caged Rajiv in while he was prime minister. The Special Protection Group was there as were plainclothes securitymen and the local police. But only on rare occasions did they prevent people from getting near Rajiv. When they did, nobody bothered. One local Congressman told a securityman: "Now the threat to him is more from you people than from the terrorists."

The 600-km whistle-stop tour of all the five assembly segments in the Amethi parliamentary constituency began almost immediately after Rajiv's small Beechcraft airplane, which he was co-piloting, touched the Fursatganj airstrip. After accepting garlands and exchanging pleasantries with state party leaders and holding a brief press conference, Rajiv hit the road, with Sonia sitting next to him, accompanied by a motorcade of 70 cars. Interestingly, for the first time in the last five years, Satish Sharma did not come along.

Time and again, Rajiv's white Gypsy left the main road to take a dirt track leading to a village. Whenever he saw a villager standing by, he would stop to talk about local conditions. Since Amethi is no longer a privileged constituency, it faces power cuts, shortages of water and essential commodities. So people had a lot to complain about. Rajiv listened and promised to look into things. But each time there was a refrain: "*Ab wo puraani baat to ho nahin sakti*" (It cannot be as it was earlier).

Rajiv did not follow any planned schedule. On the first day, he drove around from 12.30 p.m. till 9 p.m. with only an hour's stop at Gauriganj. Everywhere he told people: "*Aap logon ne badi madad ki*" (You people helped me a lot). He even visited Amethi which many thought he would give the go-by since it was the site of the assault on Janata Dal leader Sanjay Singh. But Rajiv insisted on going through the main market on foot, even as a few youths waved black flags and shouted "*Rajiv Gandhi vapas jao*" (Rajiv Gandhi go back).

Amid the flurry of village tours, the former prime minister talked politics too. In Gauriganj, he declared it was his turn to talk about the Bofors gun deal. Said he: "If I remember correctly, they said they would expose the whole deal within 16 days of coming to power. Why this silence now?" (A couple of days later, the public announcement that an FIR was being lodged by the CBI was made in New Delhi.) His government, he said, had negotiated with Bofors for the return of the commission on the gun deal. "We had finalised the return of the money but because the elections had been announced, we left the job of actually taking it back for the new Government," he added.

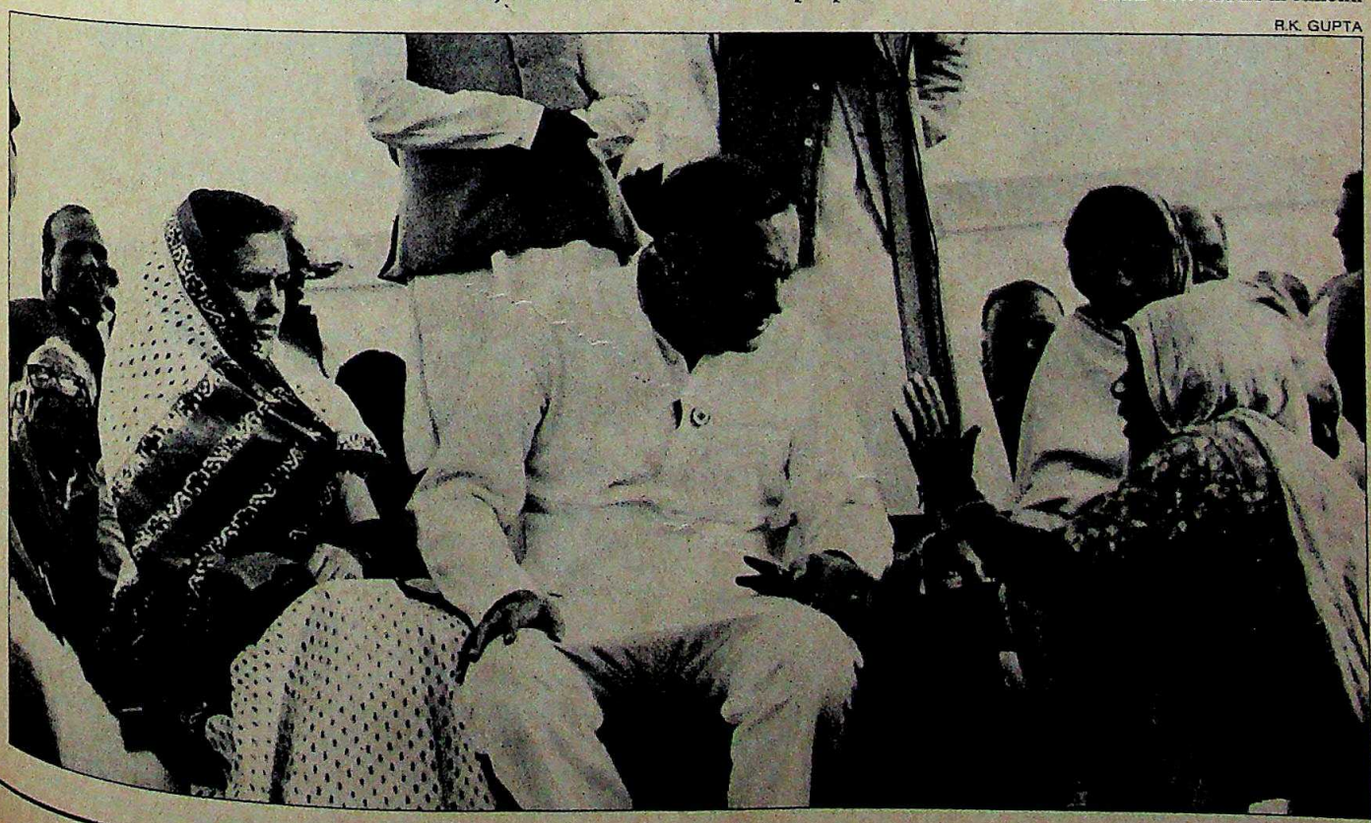
Later, while talking to INDIA TODAY, he attacked the new Government for asking all the governors to resign. Said he: "The Government changes but certain institutions do not, to maintain continuity. And it is especially unfortunate because it's a government which has only got 18 per cent of the votes, that is doing this."

Whether those arguments will have any effect on the electorate all over the country remains to be seen. But as his visit to Amethi showed, Rajiv is clearly making a special attempt to relate to the people. That was best seen at Hathkile village where an old man stuck his head inside the jeep. When a securityman tried to move him aside, Rajiv smilingly told him: "*Arey bhai, dekh lene do*" (Let him have a look). That's a far cry from the imperious "*Hame dekhna hai*" of Rajiv's prime ministerial days.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Amethi

Rajiv in Amethi: back to the people

R.K. GUPTA



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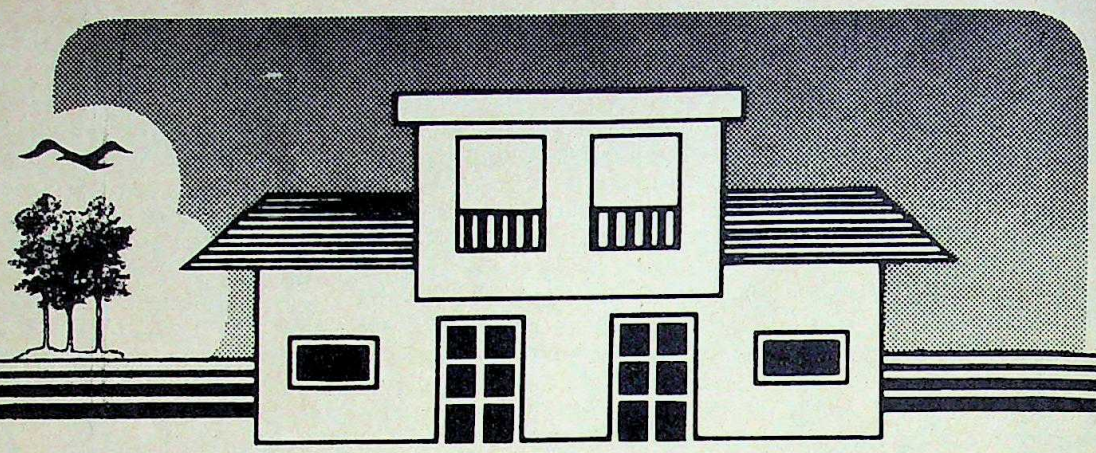

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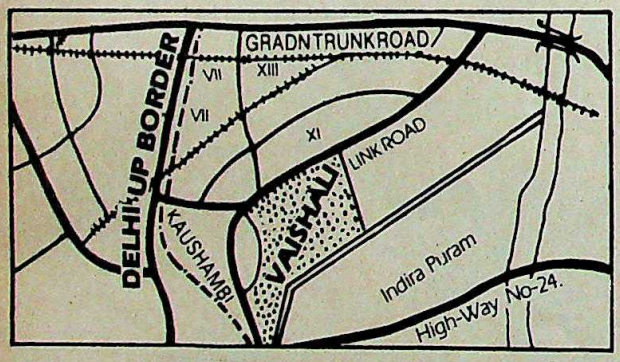

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PUNJAB

Seeking Shelter

● THE death of Jagdev Singh Khudian, the Akali Dal(Mann) MP from Faridkot, under mysterious circumstances has set alarm bells ringing. Party MPs, who had scoffed police protection during the Lok Sabha elections, are now themselves asking for cover. Party President S.S. Mann has got himself half a dozen guards, most of them dismissed Punjab policemen. Two MPs belonging to the Mann group, Dhian Singh Mand and Rajinder Kaur Bulara, have also accepted the full complement of security

Mann: added protection

guards. Interestingly, most of the party MPs now seeking cover were on the "wanted" or "surveillance" lists before they contested the elections.

The old Akali guard is leaving nothing to chance either. S.S. Barnala and Balwant Singh continue to occupy government bungalows which have been converted into virtual fortresses. And former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal, who has got private gunmen apart from police protection, is also getting the boundary wall around his residence raised. The only MPs still refusing security cover are Sucha Singh, Bimal Kaur Khalsa and Raj Dev Singh. "I have enough boys to take care of me," said Bimal Khalsa to a police official who offered her protection. "You tell me if you need security."

MAHARASHTRA

New Alliance

NAMAS BHOJANI

Prakash Ambedkar at a Dalit rally

● AFTER weeks of courting by the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal, Dalit leaders in Maharashtra have cast their lot with the ruling Congress(I) for the coming assembly polls. But this decision may prove costly and splinter the Dalits, recently united under the Republican Party of India (RPI).

Missing from the press conference called to announce the alliance was Prakash Ambedkar—grandson of Dalit leader Babasaheb Ambedkar—who heads the largest faction within the RPI. Prakash favoured an alliance with the Janata Dal and even met Prime Minister V.P. Singh in Bombay. But he and other RPI leaders were outvoted.

For now though, the factions seem to have buried their differences in order to oppose the powerful BJP-Shiv Sena combine. At a mammoth rally at Shivaji Park last fortnight, Ramdas Athawale, former Dalit Panther leader, declared: "The saffron flag will never flutter over Mantralaya. We will ensure the tricolour remains there." Meantime, Chief Minister Sharad Pawar has offered 40 seats to their new poll partner. But although the Congress(I) is congratulating itself on winning over the Dalits, the big question still is whether the alliance can work at the grassroots level.

ORRISA

Dubious Deal

● SCANDALS are great levellers. Long used to hurling charges against the ruling party, the Janata Dal in Orissa now finds itself in the Congress(I)'s shoes. Incriminating evidence of involvement in a dubious land deal has surfaced against Sarat Kar, the state Janata Dal secretary-general.

Land settlement records reveal that Kar earlier owned two plots of land, which, under section 12(2), debarred him from owning a third. However, he has gained possession of plot number A-11 through government allotment. "I'd sold the two plots to my brother and sister-in-law," Kar tries to explain, but has no answer to the fact that despite their sale he remains debarred from securing a fresh allotment. Says he: "If it is illegal, let them cancel the allotment." But despite the air of unconcern, Kar is in a hurry to put a lid on the scam with elections just round the corner.

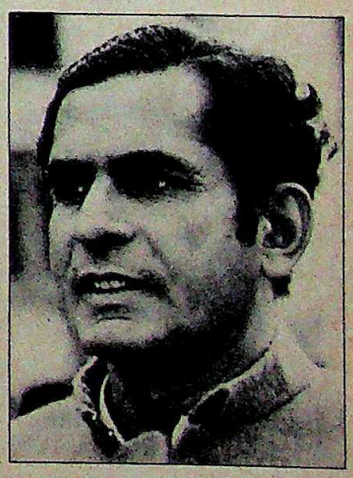
MADHYA PRADESH

Night Bird

● IF there's one chief minister available even in the early hours of the morning, it's Madhya Pradesh's Shyama Charan Shukla. Strange as it may sound, Shukla believes there's no time like night time to get work done. As he did 13 years ago during his previous chief ministership, Shukla—a workaholic and nightbird—is busy working into the wee hours.

A Jabalpur-based newsman was recently shocked when he was asked to meet the chief minister at 1.45 in the morning. "There is so much work to be done that I feel even if I had 40 hours in a day it would not be sufficient," Shukla remarks.

But there are other reasons as well for his working late. Shukla can seldom keep an appointment—and the delay stretches on creating a vicious circle. Since he works almost till dawn, he perhaps wakes up a bit late breaking many important appointments. Recently, the chief minister showed up for the inauguration of the National



Shukla: workaholic

Jamboree of Scouts and Guides two hours late. But by then, the organisers had invited his rival Congress(I) politician Arjun Singh to do the needful.

If nothing else, that should be a sure way to persuade Shukla to reschedule his working pattern.

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IPKF

Supplies Scandal

Inquiries reveal bungling in purchases

IN the army, it's being called the "*anda murga*" (egg and chicken) case. No, it's not the metaphysical riddle of which came first that's bothering the defence forces. The issue involved is far more serious: the supply of substandard provisions at high rates to the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka. And among those in the dock following three courts of inquiry are top-ranking officers of the Army Supply Corps (ASC).

The origins of the case go back to Operation Pawan launched on July 29, 1987. At the time, the action was expected to last about a fortnight and involve 10,000 troops. These, it was decided, would be maintained by drawing 25 per cent extra rations on existing troops based in Port Blair being supplied by an ASC company. The then GOC of the Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala area, Major-General Nirmal Sondhi, suggested that short-term tenders be called for supplying rations for one month.

The tenders were, however, rejected because it was felt that the rates quoted were too high. Instead, A.K. Gupta, then major-general ASC, Southern Command, who had moved with the tactical headquarters from Pune to Madras, sanctioned local purchases. These continued for several months, even when the IPKF presence in Sri Lanka swelled to

Provisions for the IPKF: serious charges

70,000 and the same ASC company had to also cater to 25,000 troops in Madras awaiting induction. The sums involved: several crores of rupees. Purchases of meat on hoof alone were valued at Rs 55 lakh a month.

In early 1988, one officer, Lt-Colonel L.M. Gladstone, pointed out that a large quantity of local purchases were made from three firms without proper receipts. Later, an inquiry by Colonel N. Vembu confirmed that no firm existed at the address given by one of the three suppliers. Later, fresh provisions were replaced partially by tinned rations. But there was bungling in that too. An officer of the Controller, Defence Accounts, Madras, observed in one noting that the firm on which the order for supply of milk powder was placed was an interior decoration and furnishing firm.

Following repeated complaints, Major-General Sondhi ordered a court of inquiry headed by Brigadier J. Sen.

The findings were revealing. Tea had been purchased from a firm of doubtful antecedents. Eggs were purchased at rates varying from Rs 75-79 per hundred while the market rate varied from Rs 53-68. Meat was purchased at Rs 73.50 a kg, while the rate quoted earlier and approved was Rs 68 a kg. Similarly, disinfectant was purchased at Rs 13.50 per litre while the same supplier had earlier quoted a rate of Rs 11. The suppliers, however, have contended that the lower rates quoted earlier were for bulk supply for a long period and not for day-to-day purchases.

The first court of inquiry and an additional inquiry indicted Colonel S.P. Sharma, commanding officer of the ASC company. Another high-level inquiry indicted Major-General Gupta and Brigadier Ashok Malhotra, then deputy director, supplies and transport, Southern Command. Most of those indicted have now moved various high courts for a stay on the proceedings.

But while only local ASC officers may finally get the axe, top officers at Army Headquarters hardly seem to have come off with flying colours. "How and why was one ASC company made to take on a colossal task eight times its capacity?" one ASC officer asks. Lieutenant-General Depinder Singh (retd.), who was then GOC-in-c, Southern Command, said on being examined that while he knew that Indian troops would stay in Sri Lanka for some time, he had to act otherwise for obvious reasons.

For the IPKF men in Sri Lanka, all this is poor consolation. Theirs is of course not to question why.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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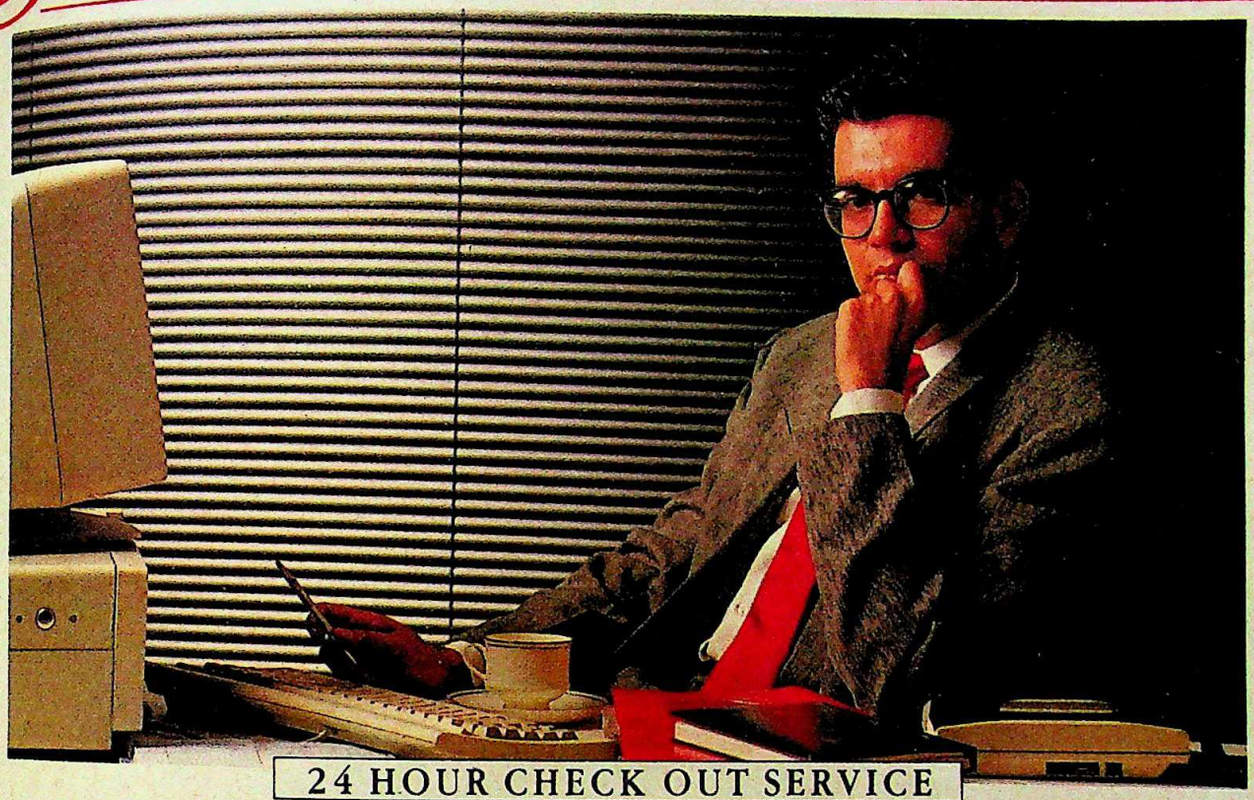

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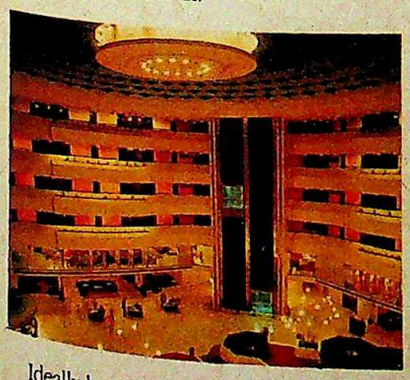

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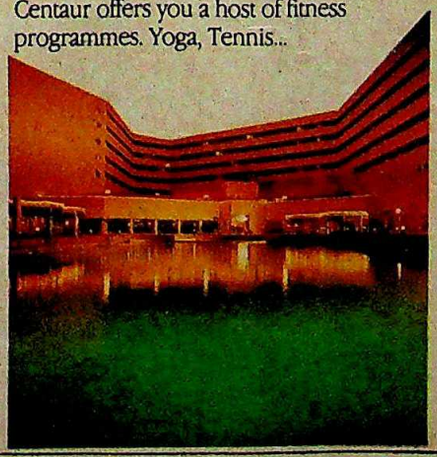

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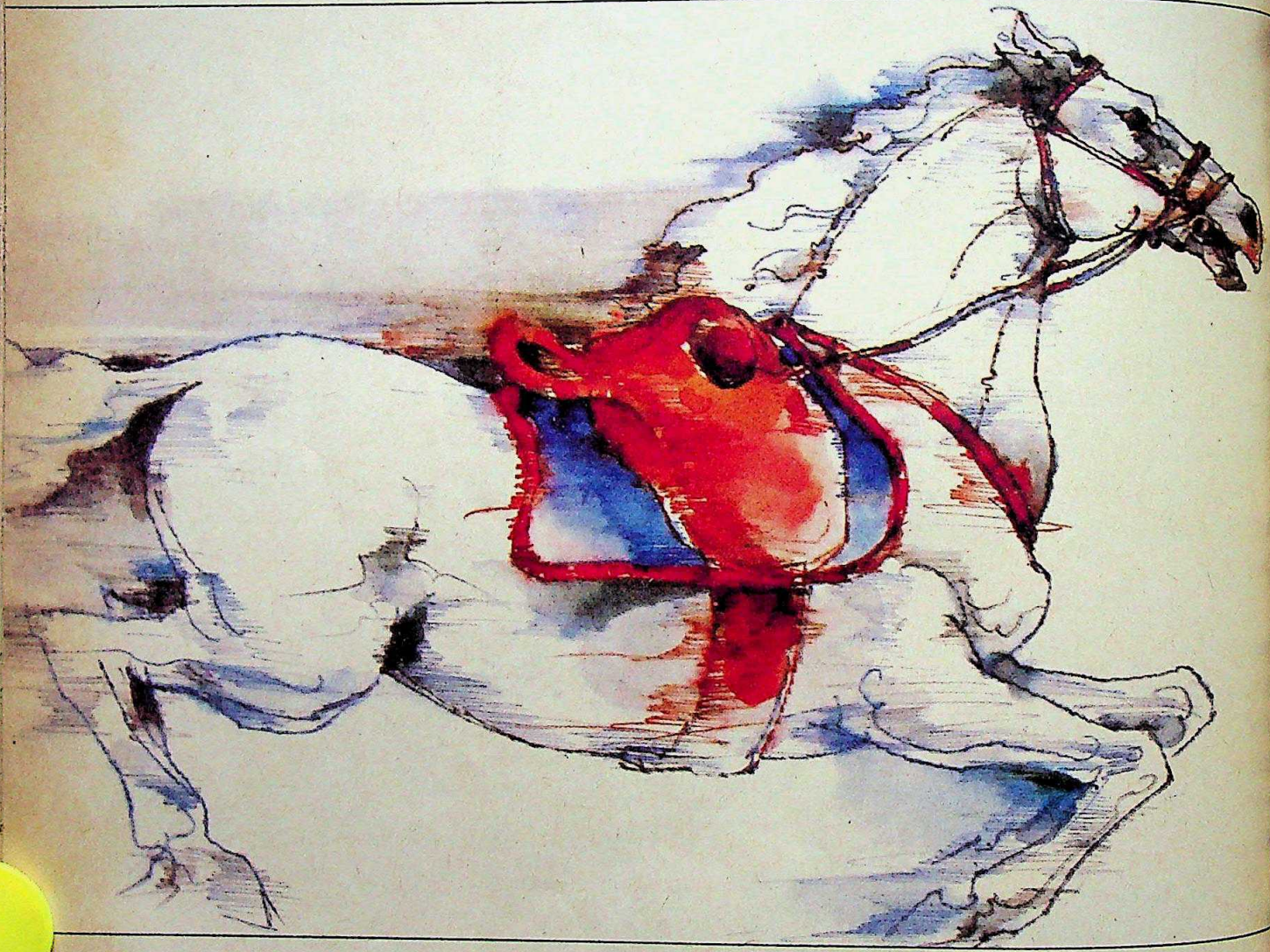

CORPORATE ENTERPRISE IN THE 1990s.

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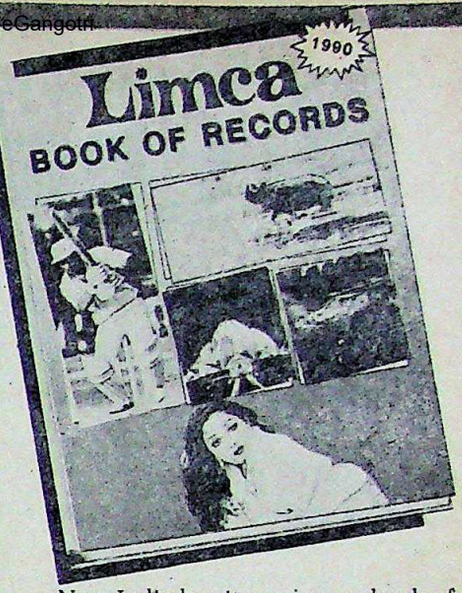

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BIHAR

A Chained Childhood

Though the law prohibits minors from being sentenced to more than three years, around 500 children have been languishing in jails and remand homes for many years, rubbing shoulders with hardened criminals, with no hope in sight.

THE law prohibits minors from being sentenced to more than three years behind bars. But in Bihar, young boys, barely into their teens, spend years incarcerated in remand homes for crimes as petty as theft. The law lays down that a trial of a minor should be over in three months. In Bihar, often years go by without cases involving minors being brought to trial. The law clearly states that children should not be placed in common jails. In Bihar, juveniles are at times sent to jails where they often rub shoulders with hardened criminals. The law visualises separate homes for juvenile delinquents and derelicts. In Bihar, they are dumped together in the dingy and depressing environs of the state's 16 remand homes like pieces of unclaimed baggage. The law also visualises separate children's courts and rehabilitation of delinquents—but in Bihar, that is almost like asking for the moon.

Take the case of Kistopal Manki, who was just 12 years old when he was arrested for killing his mother's paramour. Though he admitted that he had opposed the relationship which developed after his father's death, the boy denied having committed the murder. But the court was unconvinced. And it sentenced him to life imprisonment in 1984. Almost six years have passed ever since then—which is double the maximum term that minors are supposed to serve—but Kistopal remains forgotten in Ranchi jail.

Fourteen-year-old Sanjay Mistry too has been charged with murder *(see box)*. And should he be convicted, he too could get a prison term far exceeding three years and be sent to jail. Says Sanat Sinha of the Project for the Protection of Children's Rights (PPCR): "Sanjay being a child, his case should not have gone to the normal courts. But Bihar still does not have a children's court, 17 years after the Children's Act was enacted."

The Children's Act, which was passed by Parliament in 1971, was enacted in Bihar 17 years ago. But the rules of the Juvenile Justice Act, passed in 1987, are yet to be formulated in the state. This should cause little surprise as even the Children's Act is rarely implemented.

Says Malati Sinha, the state's welfare secretary: "We constituted a Children's Welfare Board last year and are trying to improve conditions in the homes." Though she is hopeful that a children's court will start functioning by 1990, she agrees that a lot remains to be done.

In August last year, a division bench of the Patna High Court did order the release of over 500 children in different jails and remand homes, who had been awaiting trial for more than three years. But the PPCR estimates that there are at least another 500 minors who have spent more than nine months in detention without the police even filing charge-sheets against them—in complete violation of a 1983 Supreme Court order that all such cases should be dropped.

How deep-rooted the problem is, is best illustrated by the

Twelve-year-old Amar Lakshman has spent the last seven years in the Patna Remand Home for Boys. The only information on record is that his mother, Shanti, became mentally ill and was sent to an asylum. Amar was then sent to the Patna remand home. Shanti has now been discharged from the mental hospital and is in the After Care Home for Women in Patna. But Amar seems destined to spend his adolescent years in the remand home. Says he: "I want to live with my mother and earn but I don't know how."

Amar Lakshman, 12, has been at a remand home for seven years

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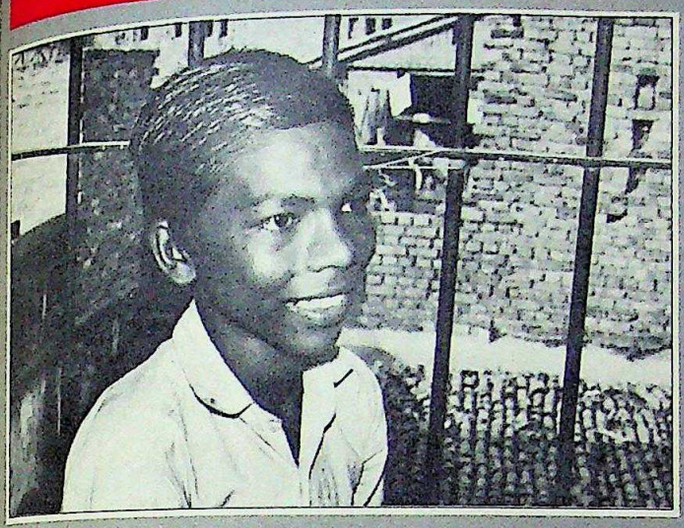
Kabir, 12, has been locked up for eight years



Kabir, 12, was kidnapped and taken to Bombay when he was five, but the abductors soon deserted him. Recalls Kabir: "They left me on a street. In minutes a policeman accosted me." The police put him in a Bombay remand home, where he spent seven years. Last year, a Bombay court ordered that Kabir be sent to Patna as the words "chor gali, Patna" were written on his palm when the police had found him. Though Kabir has spent six months in the Patna home, no "chor gali" has been found. As there is said to be one such street in Calcutta, a Patna court has now ordered that he be sent there.

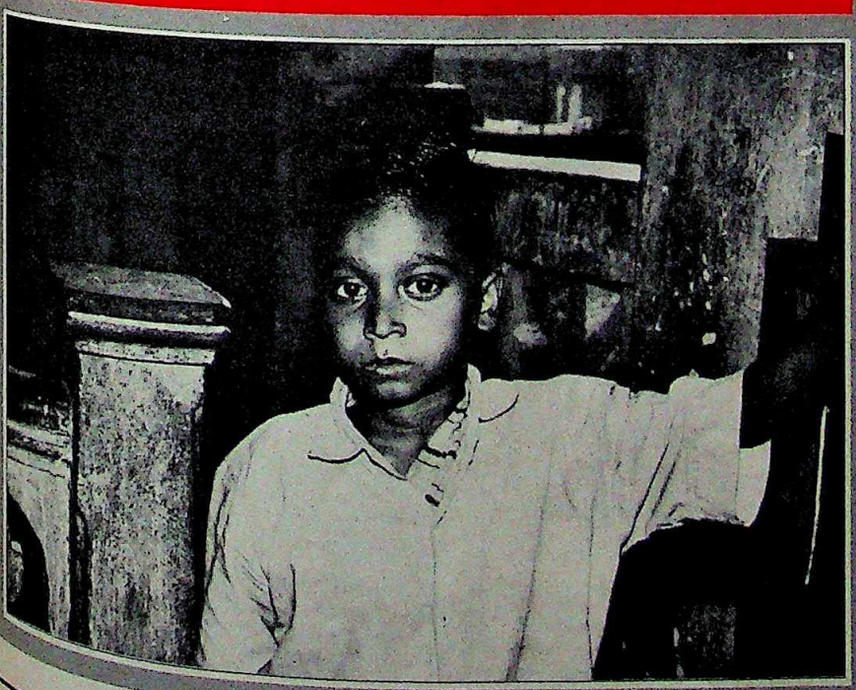
experience of the court itself. When the Patna High Court asked for the names of children awaiting trial for three years and more, the state Government furnished a list of 514 such children. But as many as eight of the 39 districts in the state failed to respond. And in the list submitted to the court, 300 names were provided by just four districts, namely, Sitamarhi, Bhojpur, Motihari and Muzaffarpur. And this information did not cover children already convicted and languishing in jails—a charge that the state Government denies.

Even if one were to believe the state Government's claim that there are no minors lodged in jails, the situation in the remand homes is bad enough, and certainly demands urgent attention. Points out Patna legal activist Ashok Priyadarshi: "There are 16 remand homes in the state and we had successfully persuaded the high court to appoint a committee in July 1989, to study all of them in detail. And the few reports that we have received so far make for absolutely dismal reading."

IN Bettiah, the committee found some of the staff using the remand home as their residential quarters; in Arrah, some college students had been allowed to use the home as a kind of hostel; in the Muzaffarpur remand home, no arrangement had been made to stop the roof from leaking; and at Patna, suppliers had stopped providing provisions to the remand home because of non-payment; and in Chaibasa, the boys had broken out of the home and demanded warm clothes. In fact, so lax was the security found in most of the homes, that inmates escaping was a common occurrence.

Though the remand homes come under the Welfare Department of the Government of Bihar, the educational facilities are

Ramesh Mandal, 8, has been at a Patna remand home for a year



A year ago, Ramesh Mandal, 8, boarded a train and landed up in Patna—where he was placed in the remand home. The boy left his village in Bengal because his father used to beat him up. But now he says: "My father used to beat me but I want to return." That is easier said than done. Though Ramesh says his father, Bulu Mandal, is a railway employee and lives in a village called Karouta—so far the authorities have been unable to locate him. The court has now ordered that Ramesh be sent to Calcutta.

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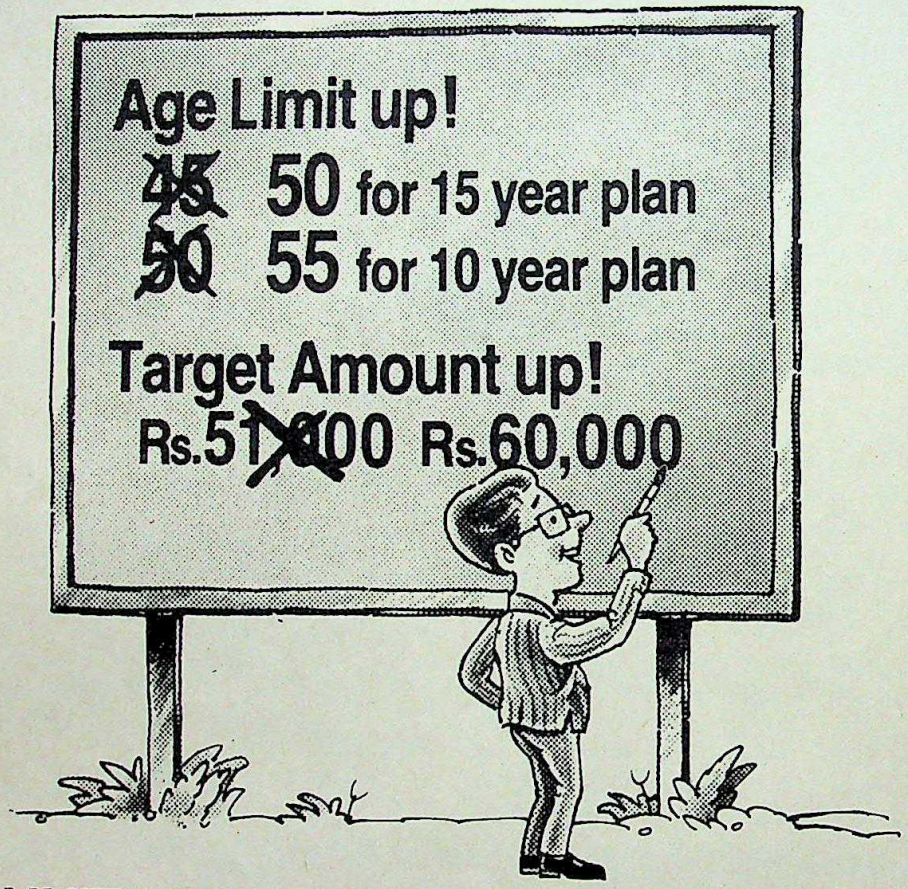

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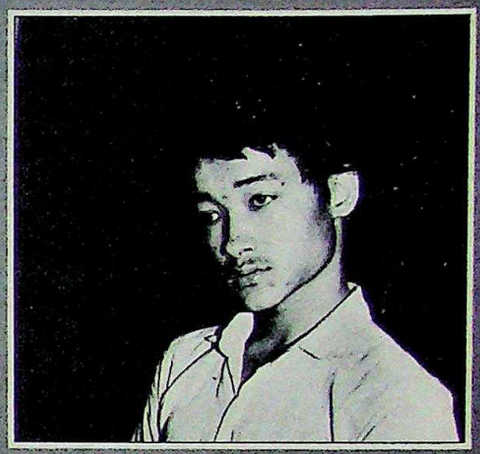
Two years ago, at the age of 12, Rambahadur Lama left his home in Nepal and came to Patna in search of work. He gained employment as a menial in the house of a businessman. He worked there for about three months, but then, according to him, when he asked for his salary, his employer accused him of stealing Rs 250 and handed him over to the police. Ever since Lama has been languishing in the depressing environs of the Patna Remand Home for Boys. One-and-a-half years have passed and no succour is in sight. Says Lama, who is now 14 years old: "I stole no money from the man but merely demanded the wages which were due to me. I would like to get out of this place and start earning a living again. That is why I left my home and came to India in the first place."

Rambahadur Lama, 14, in a remand home for petty theft



dismal. It is true that teachers have been appointed for all the homes. However, they have managed to achieve very little. Explains a teacher: "To start with we get an assorted bunch of children, some are young while the others are older, with varying levels of education. Many of them periodically are taken to the court; some are released while others are sentenced. New boys keep coming and this makes it difficult to adhere to a particular syllabus or a time-frame."

SAYS Sanat Sinha of PPCR: "The court has given no direction to the state Government to look after the boys after their release. And while it is acknowledged that the Government is not equipped to take such care, it appears allergic to taking help from voluntary agencies." He is particularly perturbed over the fate of nine boys charged with petty theft who have spent 10 years or more in detention. In fact, most of the boys in the homes are accused of petty theft. Stealing cabbages, a 12-volt battery, Rs 35 are some of the charges against them.

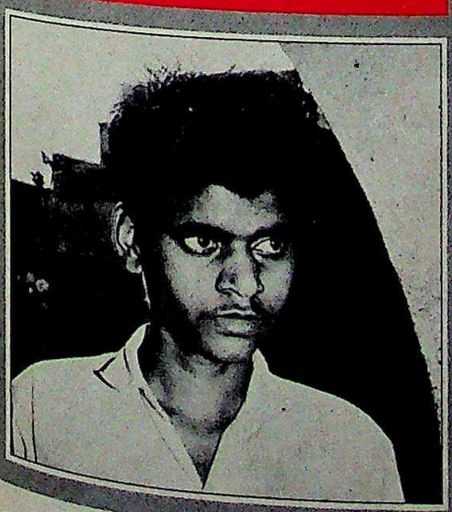
But trapped in the callous judicial system they spend years as undertrials. Pappu Kumar Mahuli, 12, was picked up from the Patna railway station on suspicion of theft. Despite having being produced in court on 10 occasions since October 1988, his case has not been heard. Says Savitri Sharma, superintendent of the Patna home: "As it is, getting police escort to produce the boys in court is difficult. But even when they are sent to the court, their cases are seldom taken up. The only solution is to hold the court in the remand home itself."

Even when the court does order the release of some of the boys, they often have nowhere to go. Eleven-year-old Subhash Gupta, who was accused of theft, says he is from Kanpur but does not know his address or the name of his father. So the court, described him as the son of *na maloom* (unknown) and ordered his release from the Patna home. But as there was no one to claim the boy (two men did turn up but they were not prepared to furnish any proof of their identity, giving rise to the suspicion that they intended to use Subhash in some illegal racket) his release was indefinitely delayed.

That ultimately is the most tragic part of these boys' stories. Children of unknowns, they remain forgotten in the dingy interiors of the remand homes.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

Sanjay Mistry, 14, embroiled in a murder case, is behind bars



In August last year, Sanjay Mistry, 14, was arrested for the murder of a five-year-old son of a bank employee. Sanjay's version is that he was asked by a man named Majedeo Singh—who has also been arrested—to fetch the boy. Singh who had some dispute with the father then killed the boy.

Sanjay who is likely to be granted bail, has no desire to be set free as he is terrified both of Singh and the murdered boy's relatives—who have threatened to settle scores with him. He is one of the few inmates of the Patna remand home who would give anything to remain where he is. No matter that life there has none of the spice and variety he craves for. Though he was studying in Class X at the time of his arrest, Sanjay does not seem destined to return to school. Says he: "They will kill me if I get out."

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'Fine Focus' Travel in 80 Cities

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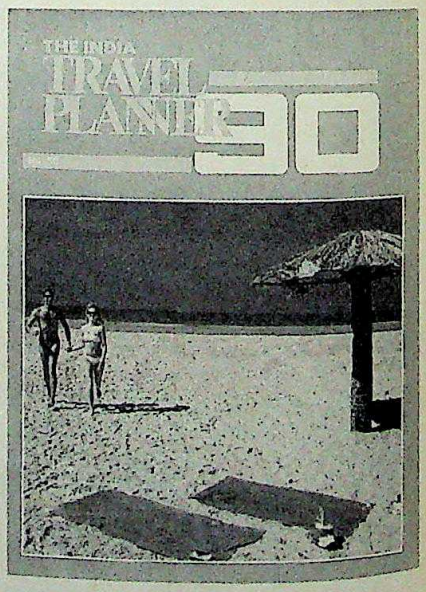

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BIHAR

Plush Path

Buddhist trail to be spruced up

THE road to nirvana can be riddled with thorns. That is what Japanese Buddhists coming in hordes to visit places in India associated with the life of Gautama Buddha, have realised over the years. The fall-out: last year the number of tourists travelling the 1300-km religious route of Nalanda, Vaishali, Bodhgaya and Rajgir in Bihar dropped to 27,000 from 90,000 two years ago.

The trail of faith passes through some of the most undeveloped regions of Bihar. For the Japanese tourists, mostly elderly, riding through the pot-holed roads, staying in places which lack both decent toilets and water, and seem to be teeming with ever-buzzing mosquitoes, it is like passing through purgatory. Says Noriyuki Ito, 39, a Japanese investment banker: "I came to pray and meditate, but I wasn't prepared for this."

But there is still hope for tourists like Ito, as many Indo-Japanese projects to spruce up the trail are in the offing. Claims Bihar's Secretary for Tourism, B.B. Lal: "The decks have been cleared for an ambitious Rs 215-crore project of which Rs 90 crore will be spent in Uttar Pradesh and the rest in Bihar. Forty per cent of the cost will be borne by the Overseas Economic Development Fund (OEDF) of Japan." And the National Park Service of the US will prepare a perspective master plan for Bodhgaya. The School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, will be the consultants.

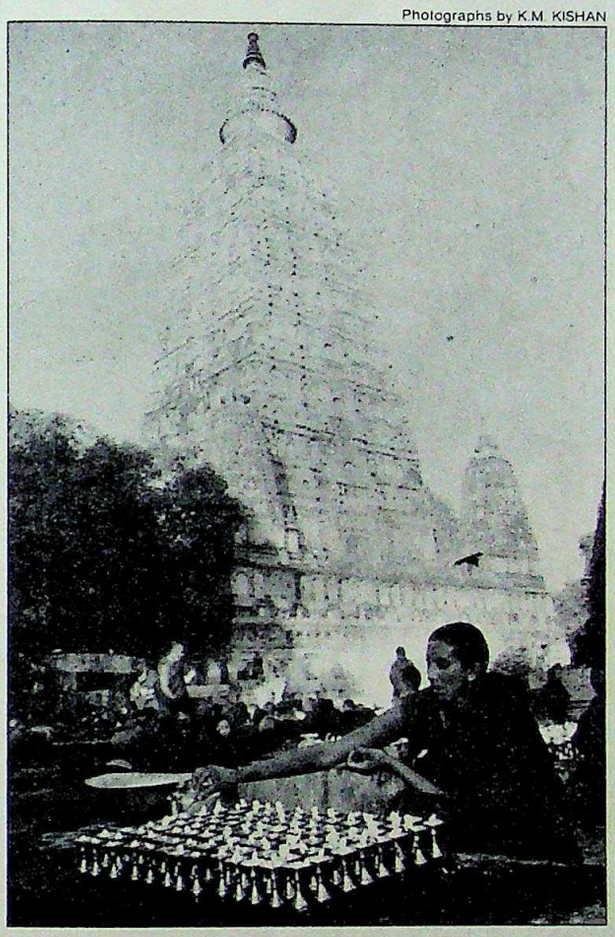
The urgency of the plans to convert the perilous pilgrims' path to a plush trail is understandable considering that the projected arrival of Buddhist tourists by the turn of the century is 2,75,000—which will be as much as 10 per cent of the tourist inflow into the country. The ambitious plans include at least 500 new hotel rooms and an exclusive 15-compartment train—costing about Rs 10 crore—to ferry 210 passengers at a time. The route: Calcutta, Bodhgaya (where Buddha attained enlightenment), Nalanda (where ruins of an ancient university are situated), Rajgir (where the first Buddhist council was convened) Vaishali (where Buddha delivered his last sermon), Sarnath (first Buddhist conversion), and Lucknow. The Centaur Hotel Group of Air India has already opened a 26-room hotel in Rajgir in collaboration with the Hokke Club hotel chain of Japan, offering the typical Japanese cuisine.

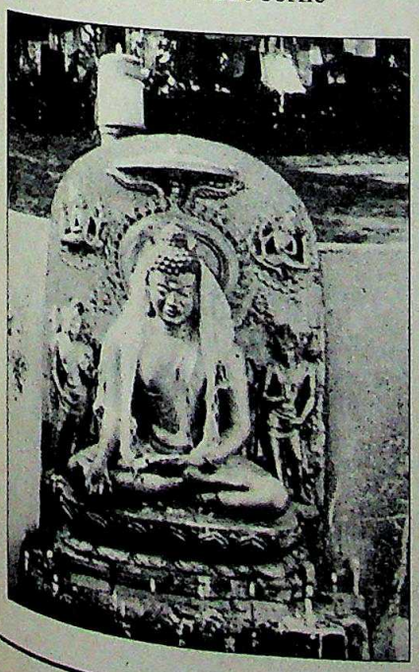
The timing for the investments coincides with the kindling of Japanese interest in India. Last year six chartered flights from Japan came to India—up from four the previous year. A Japanese government delegation and Japanese travel agents had come last year to identify areas of interest. Says Jamshyd Sethna of Travel Corporation of India: "Japan is the growth area. In the pilgrimage route we have a unique advantage."

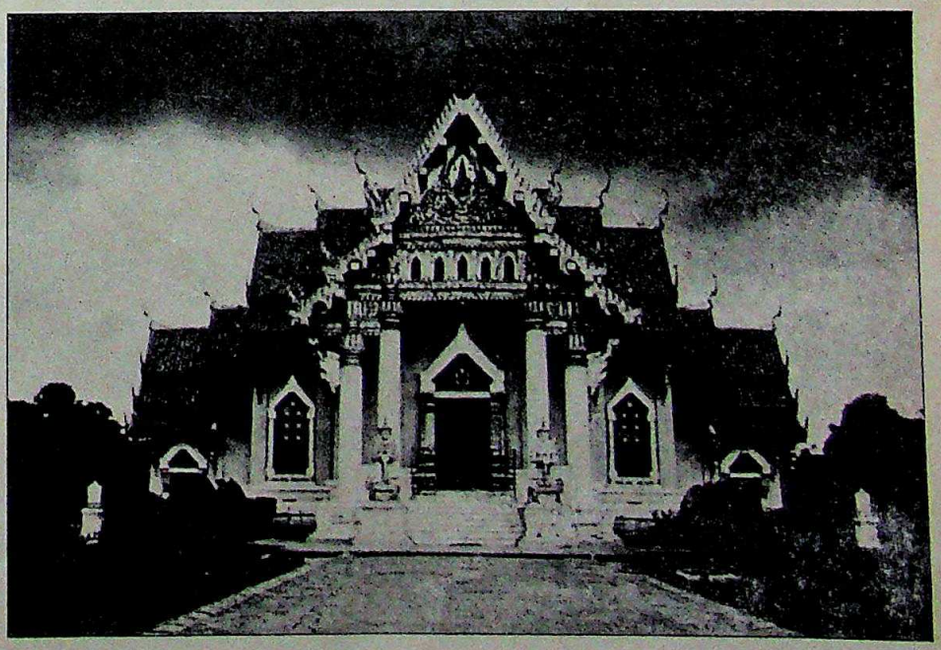
If all goes well, work will start soon and within the next four years, the Buddhist trail will be paved with more roses than thorns. And yens too.

—SALIL TRIPATHI
and UTTAM SENGUPTA

Photographs by K.M. KISHAN







(Clockwise from below) Thai temple, Buddha statue and monks in Bodhgaya: elaborate plans

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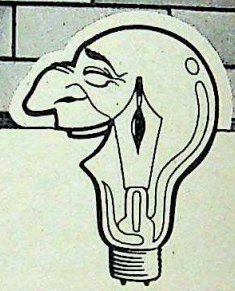
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ANNUAL CARTOON CONTEST 1990



THEME :

1. THE NEW GOVERNMENT
2. Caricatures of prominent Indian/foreign personalities

DEADLINE

Wednesday, February 28, 1990

PRIZES

(in each category)

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2. All works must be original and unpublished.
3. The size of the cartoon should not exceed 30x50 cm. or be less than 20x30 cm.
4. Each entrant should indicate name, age, address, occupation, telephone number (if any) on the reverse side, in BLOCK LETTERS.
5. Each contestant may take part in either category or both, but submit no more than THREE entries in EACH category. All caricatures should be identified on the reverse side.
6. All prize-winning entries will become the property of The Hindustan Times. The Hindustan Times reserves the right to reproduce the award-winning cartoons in newspapers and magazines published by the HT Group.
7. All entries should be on white drawing paper and in black, waterproof ink. All drawings should be neat and clean. No drawings in colour will qualify.
8. The decision of the jury will be final and irrevocable.
9. The results of the contest will be published in The Hindustan Times dated March 18, 1990 (Dak editions: March 19)

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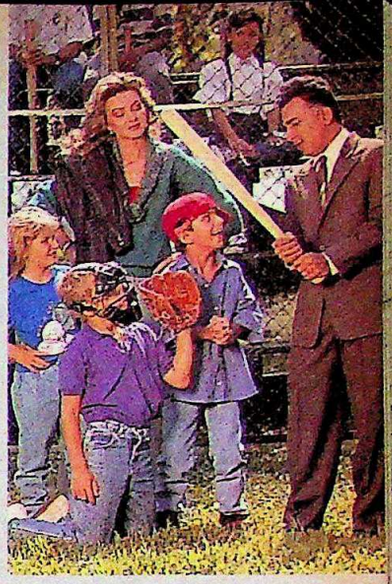

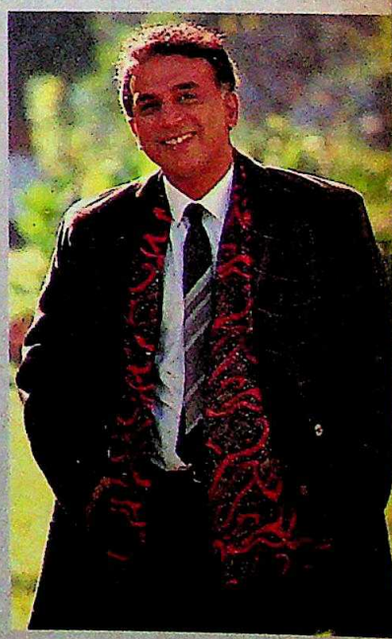

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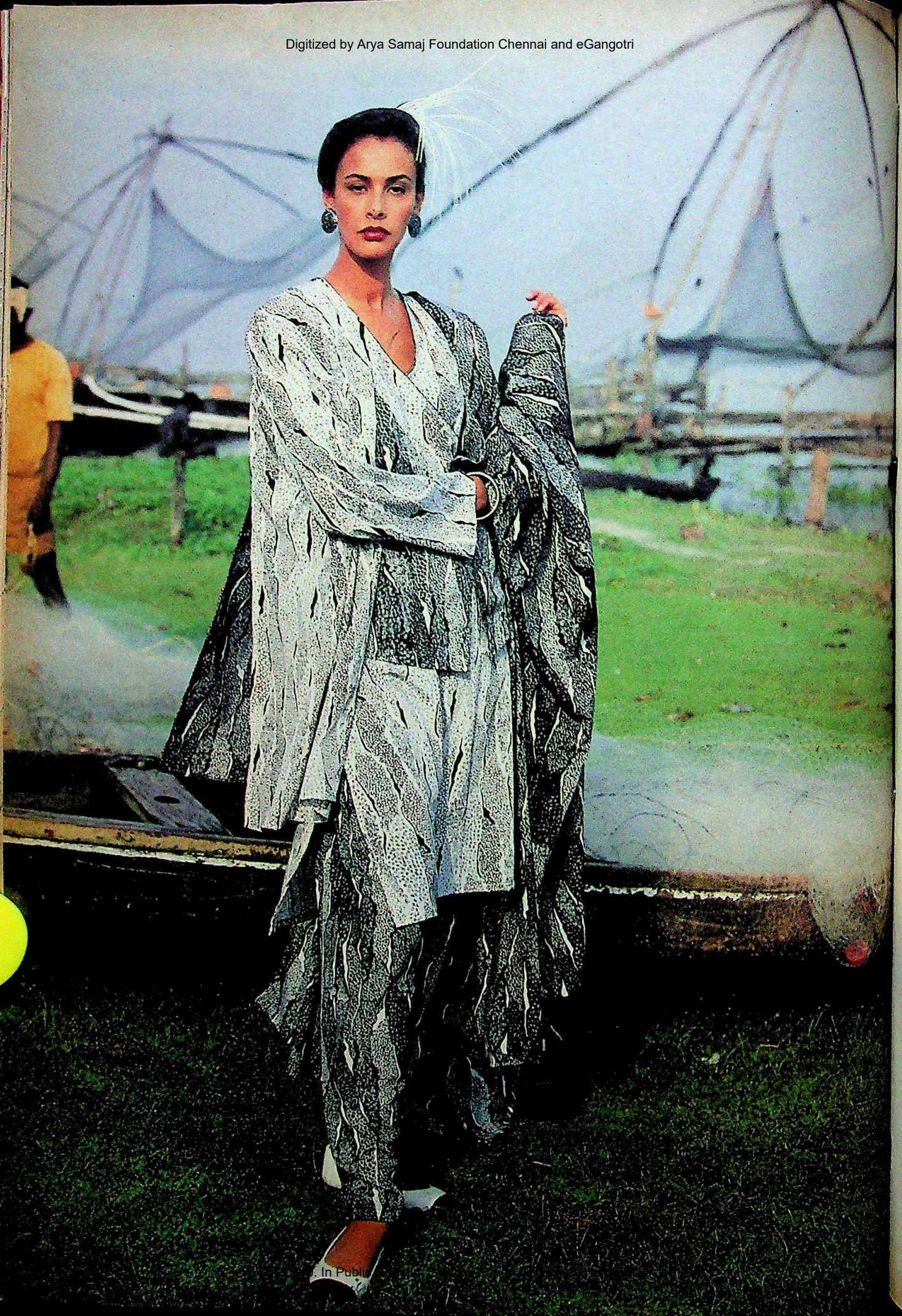

. In Public

You are flash-of-light. You are blush-of-dawn. It's your way to be. You fascinate me.

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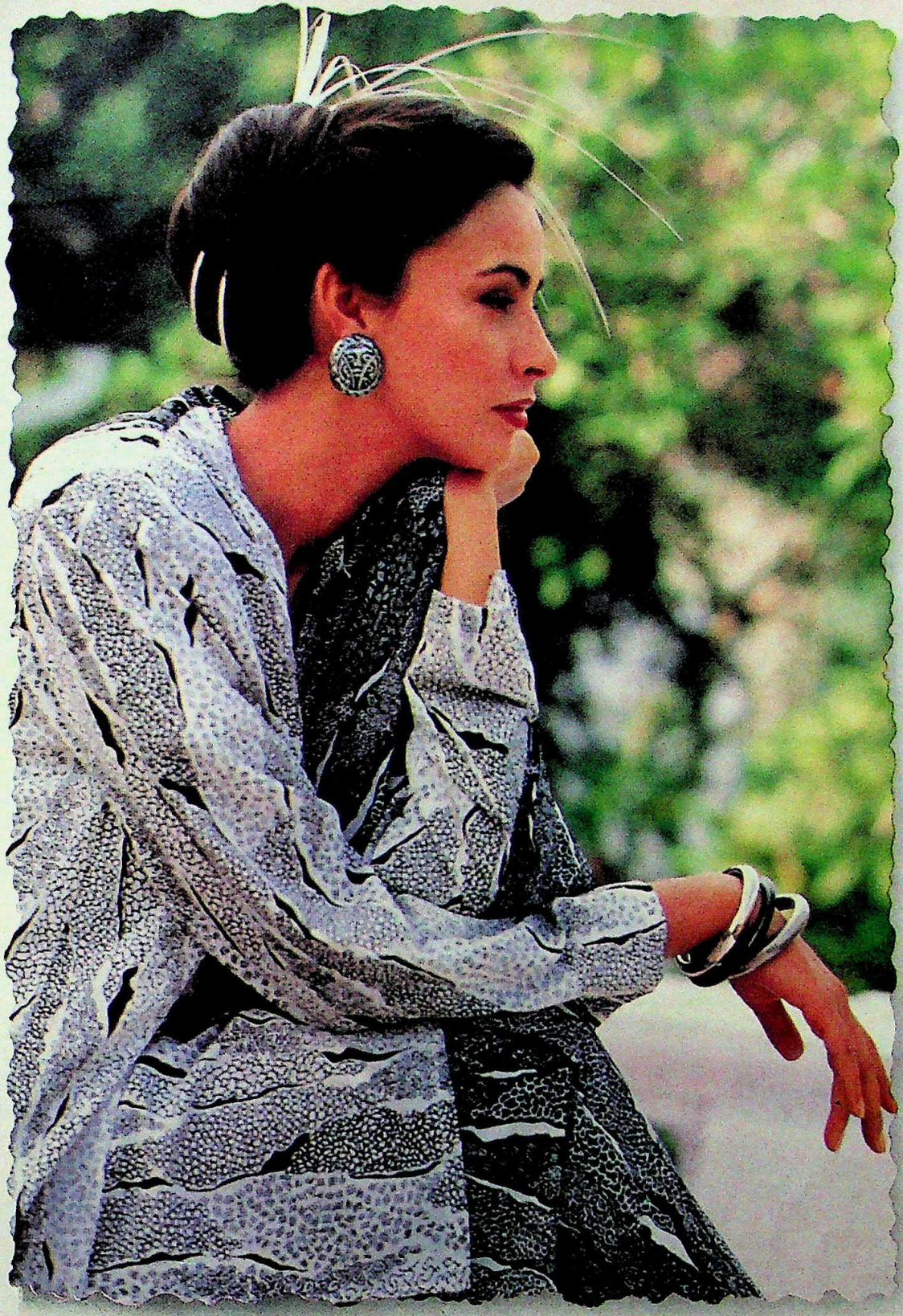
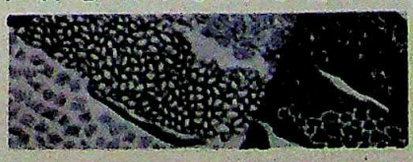


Garden*

FABRIC IDEAS



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DEVI LAL

Talking Tall

Listening to none, pronouncing his often premature thoughts on all political imbroglios and throwing established conventions to the winds, the deputy prime minister plays the self-anointed role of* tau *to the hilt.

IRREPRESSIBLE politician. A law unto himself. A bit of a buffoon, constantly holding forth on his exotic beliefs. A juggernaut rumbling along on the political terrain mowing down opponents with abrasive ease. That's 75-year old Devi Lal, who has with his recent utterances, created more controversies and caused more embarrassment for Prime Minister V.P. Singh than the Congress(I) itself. As if he was the leader of the Opposition and not the deputy prime minister.

Be it Punjab, or Kashmir. Devi Lal has something to say. "*Tau* (elder uncle) is the driver if the BJP is the accelerator and the Left parties the brakes," he explained recently. Driver or not, he seems to have attached serious importance to the title of *tau* he's anointed himself with. "I'm only playing the role of *tau*," he says with careless elan.

Indeed he is. And playing it to the hilt. Like a genie he hovers above the seat of power, often taking off on self-appointed errands, then stretching back to watch the resultant hullabaloo. "Drama enabled Devi Lal to be prime minister for four minutes. He still seems to be suffering from a hang-over," says a National Front minister. "*Meri adat hey, jo dil mein hota hey, mein bol deta hoon* (I speak my mind, it is my habit)," explains Lal.

It seemed it was this urge which made him blurt out that the Congress(I) should stay away from the recent all-party rally at Ludhiana. The Government was then thinking in terms of a national consensus to the complex Punjab problem. Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed had even issued a formal invitation to the Congress(I). Sources close to him, however, reveal that in this instance, at least, Devi Lal wasn't shooting his mouth.

He was for once, talking at V.P. Singh's behest and the move worked just as they'd planned: Rajiv Gandhi wrote a strong letter to the prime minister demanding to know whether he shared his deputy's views, V.P. Singh ignored the letter, and the Congress(I) boycotted the all-party rally in protest. A source of some embarrassment. But the Congress(I)'s absence helped the Government take one step forward in its effort to endear itself to the Sikh masses. And, Simranjit Singh Mann who had refused to share the stage with the "perpetrators of Sikh genocide" agreed to meet V.P. Singh at the Halwara airport.

But as a Janata Dal leader says: "You give him an inch and he takes a yard." Which he has done with Punjab itself, trying unsuccessfully to promote the interests of close friend Prakash Singh Badal, who is becoming increasingly redundant there.

Another major controversy the rustic Haryanvi sparked off was when only one day before the National Front Government was to introduce a bill in Parliament to extend the period for reservations for Scheduled Castes, he rasped: "Reservations should favour only economically weaker sections." Congress(I) MPs gleefully raised this in Parliament, much to the chagrin of the embarrassed Government. Each time Devi Lal got up to speak, opposition members shouted: "*Tau baith jah*" (*Tau*, sit down).

But Devi Lal is not one to sit down. The title of deputy prime minister might just be a decorative one. The Attorney General Soli Sorabjee has, after all, submitted in the Supreme Court that "there is no constitutional sanction for the post of deputy prime minister as such", and that Devi Lal is "just a minister like other members of the council of ministers. He has been described as deputy prime minister and that does not confer on him any powers of the prime minister".

> **With his recent utterances, Devi Lal has created more controversies and caused more embarrassment for Prime Minister V.P. Singh than the Congress(I) itself.**

But nothing fazes Devi Lal. "To be in command is second nature to him," says an aide. He is deputy prime minister without powers, but as he says: "So what? I'll set conventions for other deputy prime ministers."

But he forgets that before setting new conventions he has to follow old ones. He does not seem to remember that there were four deputy prime ministers before him—Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Morarji Desai, Y.B. Chavan and Jagjivan Ram—who conducted themselves with considerable dignity, keeping national perspectives in mind.

Agriculture Ministry officials are surprised at his style of functioning. Says an officer: "There are times when he signs a file only after reading each word. Usually he makes us read out the contents." His latest passion is dairy farming or "white industry" as he calls it. He is often in meetings with V. Kurien, chairman, National Dairy Development Board.

Used to acting as supreme commander when he was chief minister, Devi Lal seems to think the country is one big Haryana. Still lodged in Haryana Bhawan, he is greeted almost every day by his two rising sons—Om Prakash Chautala on whom fell the mantle of Haryana chief ministership and Ranjit Singh—who are the first regulars to ring up. Chautala still remains prime adviser. Devi Lal's political adviser K.K. Deepak is now officer on special duty in the Agriculture Ministry. In office or at home, the Chaudhary is perpetually in the company of Haryanvis who constantly remind him of his king-maker image.

Consequently, he often fetches flak for his dictatorial style of functioning—constantly interfering in transfers and affairs of other ministries. There are complaints that his men were constantly ringing up the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) recommending names when V.P. Singh was appointing secretaries. He even sent External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujral a list of names he wanted considered for ambassadorial appointments. He is also believed to have stalled the transfers of Haryanvi custom officials

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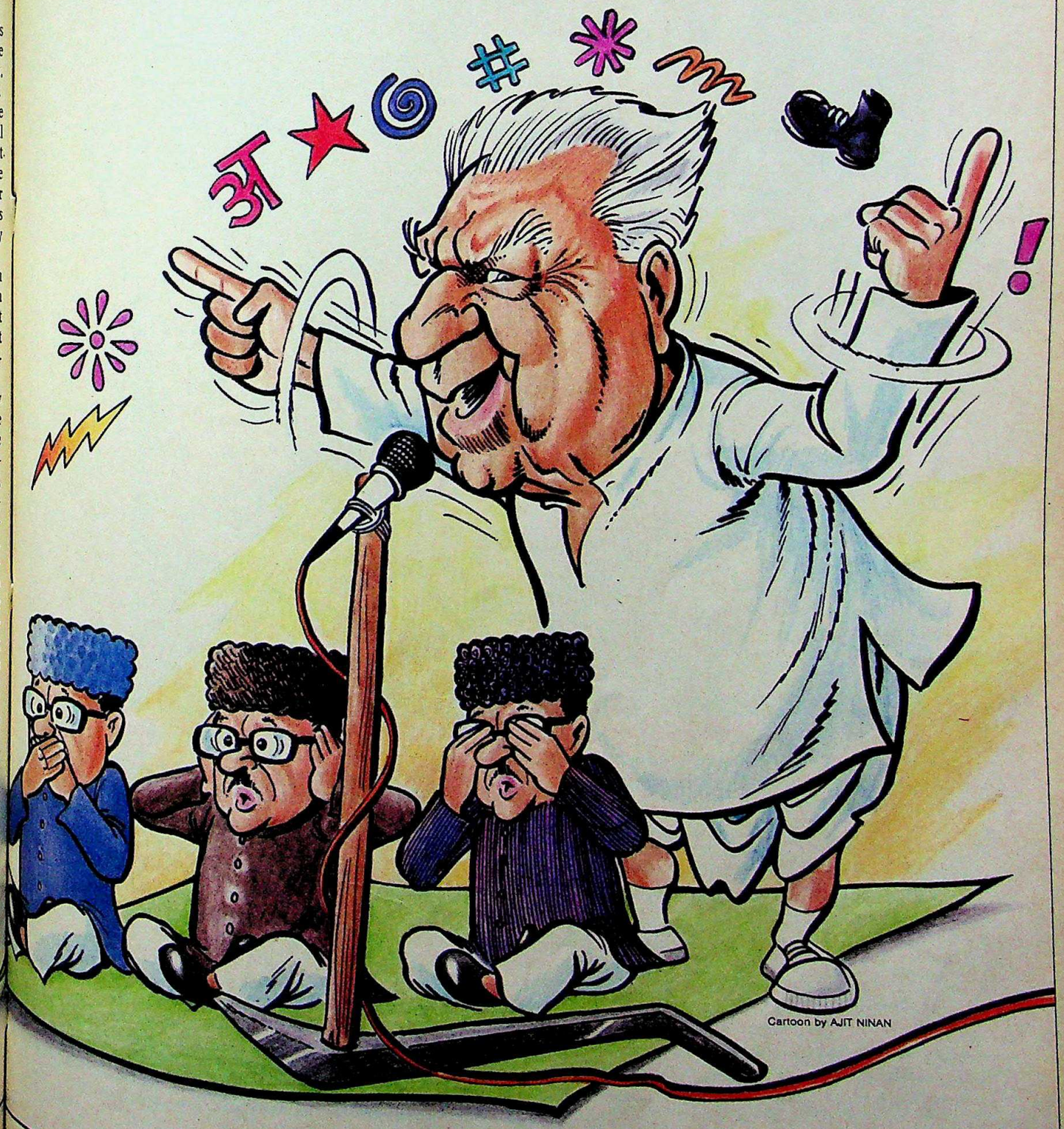
"Am I a thief that I should keep my views hidden? It's only the Government's views which are binding, not anyone's personal views."

"Tau is the driver if the BJP is the accelerator and the Left parties the brakes."

"I will set conventions for other deputy prime ministers."

"My detractors want to create differences between me and V.P. Singh and bring down the Government this way."



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

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who were being posted out of Bombay. Lal says some vested interests are misusing his name.

"Devi Lal was keen on becoming the home minister and he interferes most in this department even though he has denied it," complains a bureaucrat in the Home Ministry. "The Government is in favour of religious leaders solving the Babri Masjid issue through peaceful negotiations," declared Devi Lal when the home minister was still to make any statement on the issue. Later, he was in Guwahati ruling out talks with ultras. Here again, the PMO had cleared his travel programme so that he could attend a Marwari convention. Earlier, he had said that the Jammu & Kashmir governor General K.V. Krishna Rao would be changed in two days. Another off-the-cuff remark which embarrassed the Government and brought forth criticism.

"My detractors want to create differences between me and V.P. Singh," says he, adding, "they think they can bring down the Government this way". An astute politician, he often proclaims: "The future of the country is safe in V.P. Singh's hands. I am committed to him as the prime minister not only for the present five-year term but also for the next."

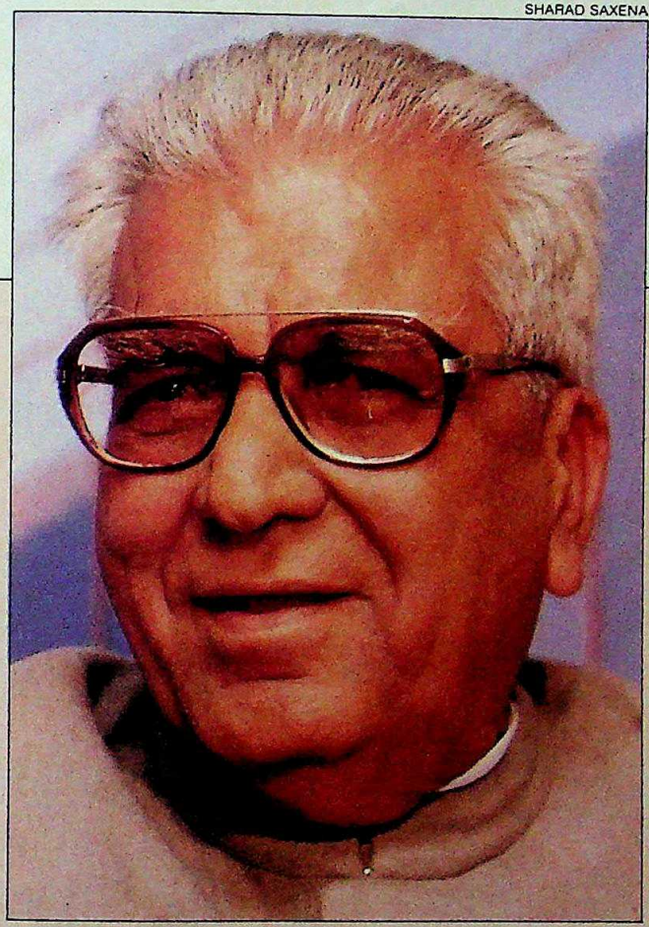
V.P. Singh, who has all along been in favour of collective leadership has given his deputy a long rope. For one, V.P. Singh needs Devi Lal, more than any other minister to keep Chandra Shekhar at bay. But the question is whether he will turn out to be the ominous albatross around the prime minister's neck.

If he has sometimes to do the 'dirty work', he is also being kept in good humour. He is the only National Front minister who joins Harkishen Singh Surjeet and L.K. Advani for a dinner meeting every Tuesday at the prime minister's residence.

Worshipped, feared, hated, mocked at, he slouches around, ready to beard every lion and poised to upset every apple-cart.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

SHARAD SAXENA



INTERVIEW

"I can't resist speaking the truth"

HE has the knack of getting himself into controversies, but remains unfazed by them. Relaxed and confident, the deputy prime minister explained his controversial utterances to Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA *at the capital's Haryana Bhawan. Excerpts:*

Q. *Why did you embarrass the Government by asking the Congress(I) to stay away from the Ludhiana all-party rally?*

A. I am only playing the role of *tau* by making such observations. We all know that the Punjab problem is the Congress(I)'s creation. Had they attended it, the rally would not have passed peacefully. In fact, my statement went in the Congress(I)'s favour.

Q. *But the Government had invited the party.*

A. Be it V.P. Singh or anyone else, the truth will remain the truth. Some people can't say the truth publicly, but I can't resist it.

Q. *Should you express your private views on a public platform.*

A. Am I a thief that I should keep my views hidden? It's only the Government's views which are binding, not anyone's personal views.

Q. *You announced that the Jammu & Kashmir governor would be changed in two days?*

A. I was watching the situation and it was quite clear to me that the change was only a matter of time.

Q. *Why do you talk more about other ministries even though you are the agriculture minister?*

A. I am also the country's deputy prime minister.

Q. *But that is more of a decorative title. What is your role?*

A. I was made deputy prime minister on V.P. Singh's recommendations. Why don't you ask him?

Q. *What is your relationship with the prime minister?*

A. We share a very good relationship. *Hamare khayalaat kaafi milte hain* (We think alike).

Q. *But you differed on the reservations issues.*

A. I had said that the reservation policy should benefit the weaker sections. It should be one person per family. Jagjivan Ram was also of the same view.

Q. *How do you always manage to be in the centre of a controversy?*

A. I am everyone's target because people are jealous.

Q. *You said there is a lobby working to create differences between you and V.P. Singh. Who are the people in this lobby?*

A. Those who were sitting on the chairs now occupied by us. They want to come back and their all-out efforts are to create another 1977.

Q. *Bhajan Lal says you have opium in the morning and thereafter don't remember what you are saying?*

A. I am the deputy prime minister of India. I don't think it behoves me to comment on things said by such sideys. I don't want to even utter his name. After all, what is he—the king of corruption.

Q. *You seem to be becoming the favourite of most cartoonists?*

A. *(Smiles). Koi baat nahi, achha hai* (Never mind).

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SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN

The Ambivalent Militant

IN Punjab now, there is one man in the eye of the storm: Simranjit Singh Mann. But the former IPS officer is riven by the contradictions of his western liberal upbringing and his religious orthodoxy which manifest themselves in his shifting, and often ambiguous, positions.

POLITICIANS court him. Newspapers seek his views. And the Sikh masses throng his public meetings. For two months now since his release from Bhagalpur jail, Simranjit Singh Mann has been in the full glow of the arclights. But despite that, the president of the Akali Dal faction that bears his name continues to be an enigma. Is he a Sikh fundamentalist in liberal garb? Or a secular liberal forced to take up extreme positions under pressure from militant organisations?

Mann's own utterances have not made it easier to arrive at an answer. On the one hand, he has extended support to V.P. Singh and spelt out his goal as autonomy within the Indian Union, as per the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. His belief in the Indian political system is reinforced by his demand for early elections in Punjab. On the other hand, he tends to relate Punjab's current problems to incidents in Sikh history and has an inviolable belief in the greatness of Sikhism. It is here that his goal thinking gets obfuscated and resembles that of the militants.

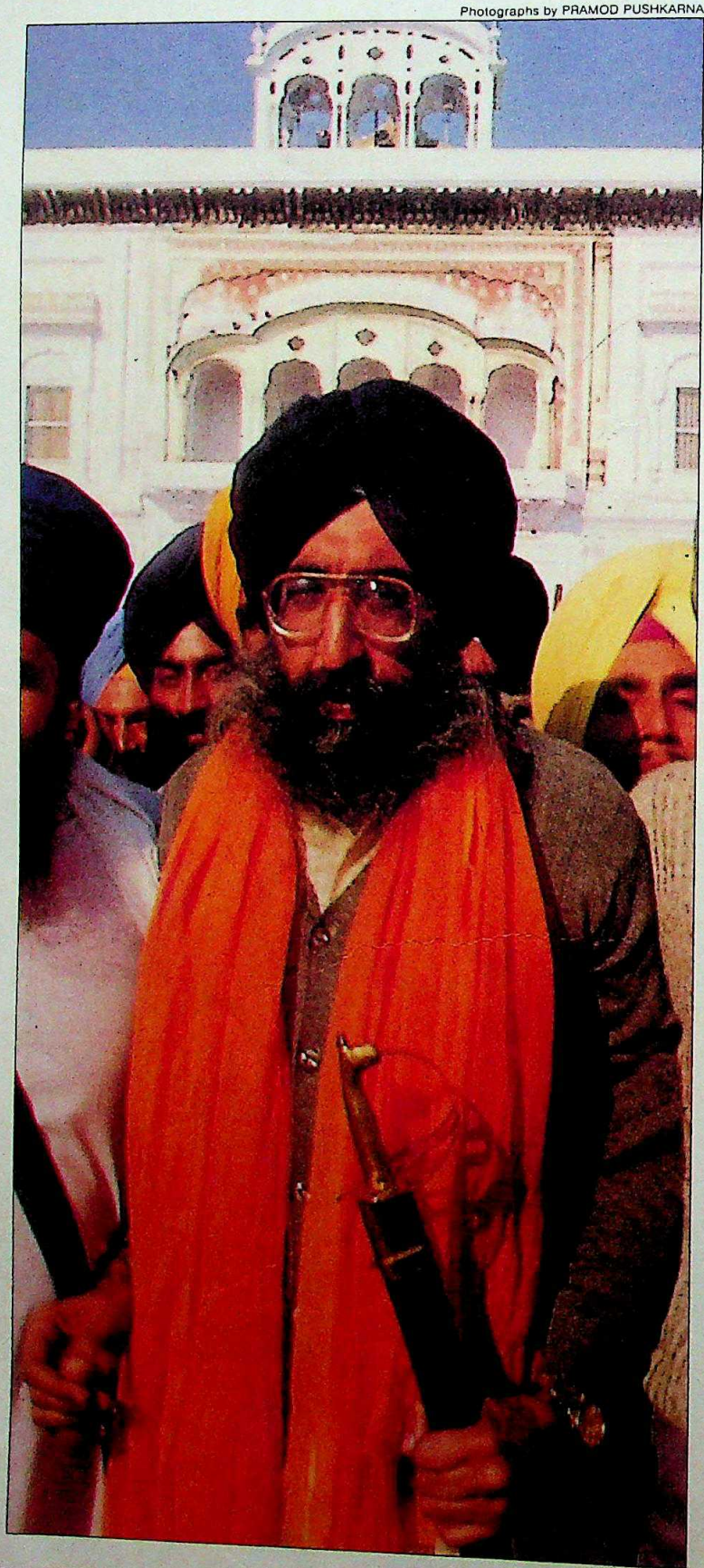
He claims to be secular. But at the same time he reveres Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who, he says "showed the understanding of great thinkers like Clausewitz (the military strategist)". And while he says the Sikhs are not terrorists, he has been unwilling to condemn killings in Punjab which he describes as the "handiwork of the Government's vigilante groups". In part, Mann's ambiguous stand is a product of the difficult situation. But the roots of his contradictions also lie in his origins.

Born on May 20, 1945 in Shimla to a wealthy family, as a child, Mann wore clothes bought from Harrods. At Bishop Cotton School, he acquired a fondness for Homer, Shelley and Wordsworth. But this westernised environment was tempered by the religious proclivities of his mother, Gurbachan Kaur. At home, Mann grew up listening to parables of the Sikh gurus.

His father, Joginder Singh Mann, occupied important positions during British rule and was a sitting member of the Assembly in undivided Punjab. After Independence, he was a minister in the Congress government and Assembly Speaker in 1968-69 in the Akali government. Says Sukhinder Singh, a schoolmate of Mann: "His father's long political association inculcated in him an interest in politics."

College friends recall his intense religiosity. Gurtej Singh, now a party colleague, remembers that when Mann was called a "yankee" (a reference to his elite public

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Mann at the Golden Temple

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school background), he retorted: "I am not a yankee. I am a sardar." In 1967, he joined the IPS. Here, colleagues recall that while he was not overtly religious and even drank liquor, religion continued to play an important part in his life. For instance, he would tell his Sikh subordinates to follow the ideals of Sikhism and not trim their beards. Around this time he also got married to Geetinder, daughter of a civil servant and the sister-in-law of Amarinder Singh, Akali Dal leader and scion of the Patiala royal family.

In the police force, Mann acquired a reputation for being both tempestuous and impulsive. In the '70s, on receiving an official circular instructing officers to pay proper attention to the prime minister's family during official visits, Mann wrote to the police chief: "The prime minister should draw a lesson from history and not take his family on official visits."

WHEN he protested against the appointment of Giani Zail Singh as Union home minister, he was transferred and sent on deputation to the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). However, it was his tenure as Faridkot district police chief in 1977-78 that attracted the most controversy. Bhindranwale visited him there and an *amrit prachar* was organised within the police lines. It was in Faridkot too that Mann was accused of issuing arms licences to people who later formed "killer squads". Mann defends the decision to organise *amrit prachar*. "*Amrit* only gives you greater courage of conviction." And as for issuing arms licences to Sikhs, he says: "Sikhs have a lust for weapons and I satisfied it through legal means." But weren't Hindus denied licences? Mann says very few asked for them. Not everyone goes along with these explanations. Said an IG of Punjab Police: "At times he behaved like a hardcore fundamentalist."

Mann has always given the impression of being a man of action, but on his own terms, even if that means becoming unpopular. For instance, while he was the SSP in Faridkot, he shot four nihangs in an encounter when they evicted the legal custodian of a gurdwara and started firing from its precincts. Even today he says: "I have no qualms about the incident—my conscience is clear."

When Operation Bluestar took place in June 1984, Mann was in his village in Patiala district. Though he had been posted to the CISF in Bombay, he happened to be on official duty in Punjab. He wrote to the President condemning the operation, then went underground, first with a Maratha family in Indore and then in Calcutta.

"Khalistan will be born out of a negative reaction against repression and injustice. Punjab can't be kept as a colony. People will rise."

◆

"The Government must sit with my party and the militants and identify the minimum agenda for talks."

◆

"Since my release, no instance has come to my notice of militants indulging in random violence, kidnapping or extortion."

◆

"My family has always sought guidance from the Damdami Taksal. So my association with Sant Bhindranwale is logical."

◆

"How can I be optimistic when the Government does not reciprocate?"

While hiding in Calcutta, he received a letter from his wife warning him that the Government proposed to eliminate him. He claims that Mrs Gandhi had marked an 'X', signifying elimination, on his file. So he decided to flee to Nepal. But he was arrested on the border and released only after the results of the general elections were announced.

He is bitter about the way he was tortured in jail. In Bharatpur, Rajasthan, he says: "My religious symbols were taken off." Another time, he claims, he was actually taken out to be executed. "I was tied to a tree to be shot but a jawan refused to open fire. It was a sublime experience."

Most of Mann's venom is directed against the Congress(I), particularly Rajiv Gandhi and Buta Singh. "I will set up a 'Congress Hunters' desk like the 'Nazi Hunters' desk in Vienna to document their crimes against Sikhs," he says and adds: "I will write to President Bush not to issue visas to Rajiv and Buta Singh. Under US law, people responsible for genocide can't enter that country."

Nor are the judiciary and the IB spared. "The judiciary was more executive than the executive and remained silent spectators when Sikhs were subjected to systematic pogroms." And Mann's spleen shows, as he vows: "The IB officers, including the then IB director H.A. Barari will have to pay like hell for what they did."

Mann's dogmatism results from a firm belief in Sikh history and a perceived discrimination of Sikhs, a feeling reinforced by the torture in jail. So today, he describes the present strife as a continuation of a "Sikh revolution" that began in 1920. And asked to clarify his political objectives, he replies: "The political goal of the Sikhs was spelt out by Guru Gobind Singh when he founded the Khalsa. I don't have to spell it out." And in the manner of a somewhat rabid mind, he draws parallels where none exists. The lines in Wordsworth's poem on the daffodils "fluttering and dancing in the breeze", he says, is an expression of the liberty and nationalism which people got. "Here too some day," he says, "the flowers will flutter and dance in the breeze."

There are, of course, those who rise to Mann's defence, insisting he is not a fundamentalist. His lawyer, Dr B.L. Wadehra, for one, points out that during all their talks, Mann has never talked in a derogatory fashion about Hindus.

Mann's political views are even more unclear. While he speaks of an ongoing Sikh revolution, he demands elections to the Vidhan Sabha. And though he speaks with special respect of Prime Minister V.P. Singh, he has hardly made things any easier for him. On a recent visit to

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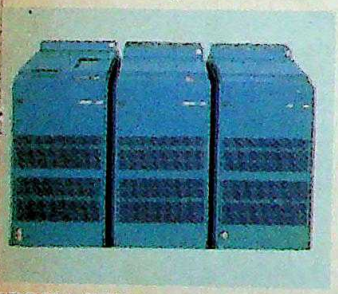

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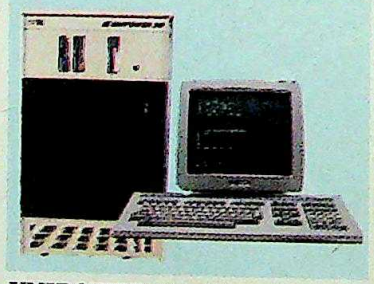

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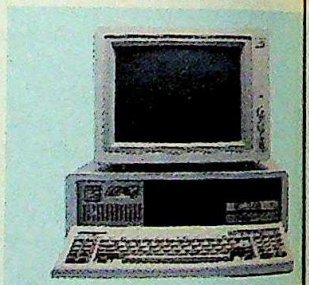

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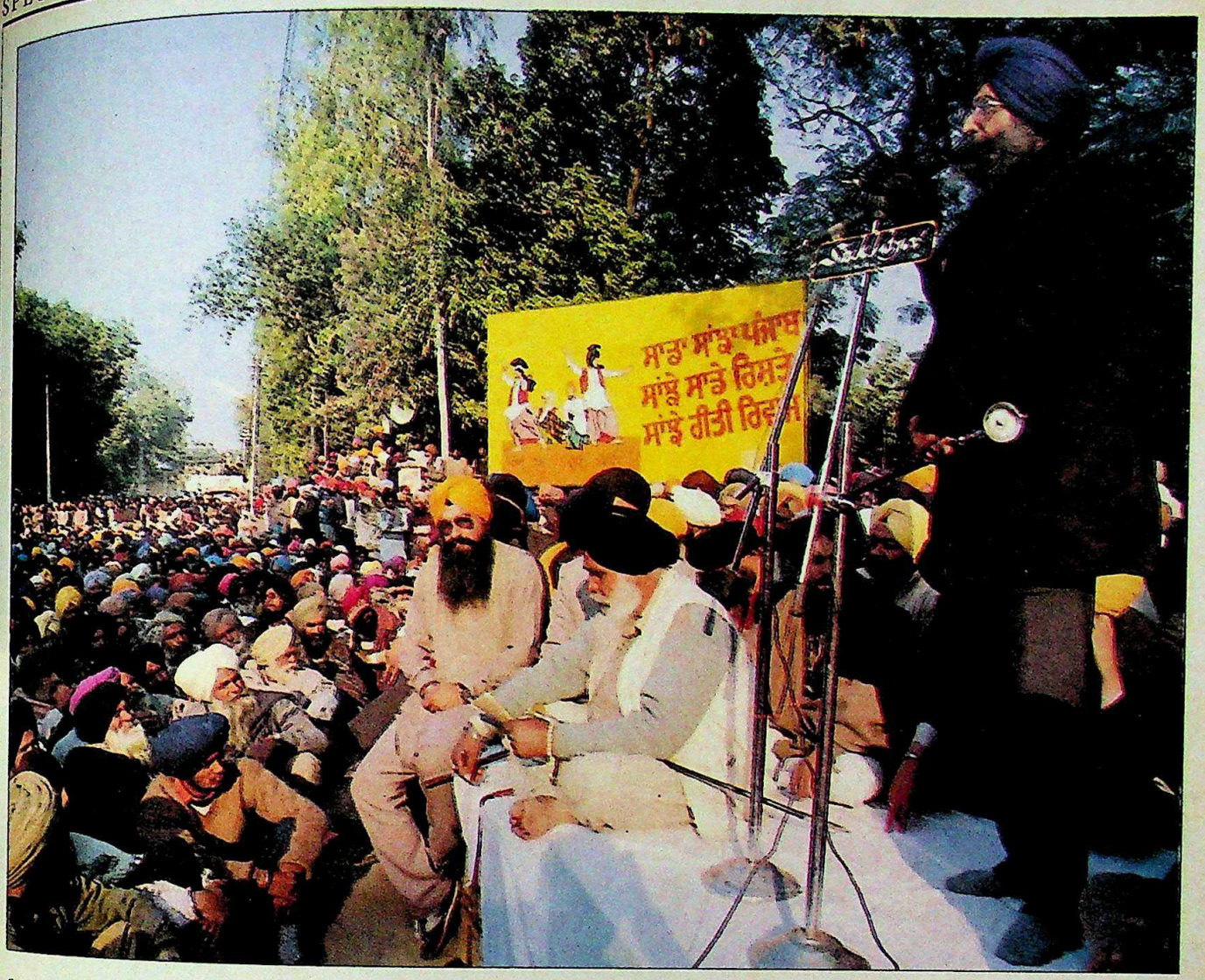

Mann at Faridkot: ambiguous stand

Srinagar, he declared that Indian security forces should be withdrawn from Kashmir. And even as the Indian Government was warning Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan not to interfere in Punjab and Kashmir, Mann declared that Pakistan was not helping Khalistani terrorists.

Last fortnight, his post-release optimism regarding a solution to the Punjab problem seemed to be fading. Said he: "How can I be optimistic when the Government does not reciprocate? I can't be expected to lie prostrate before them." He added that he was veering around to the view expressed by the political philosopher Hobbes: "Covenants without the sword are but words." Pushed to the wall by extremist groups, Mann may be forced to adopt even more extreme postures.

In his own party, he has a rebellion on his hands. Not everyone agrees with his goal of an autonomous state within the Indian Union. And last fortnight, when he announced the names of his party's district presidents and the members of the working committee, there were murmurs of protest. Reason: the Manjit Singh group had been given precedence over the group led by Baba Joginder Singh, Bhindranwale's father. At one meeting where Mann was present, there was firing and Mann had to suspend Rajdev Singh, the deputy leader of the party in Parliament. So strong is his sense of righteousness, that he often ignores the advice of partymen. Last fortnight, for instance, despite advice to the contrary, he insisted on probing the role of Baba Joginder Singh in the incident of firing at one of his functions. Then the question of militant support for his leadership still remains a vacuously open one.

In that case, can Mann pull Punjab out of the current quagmire? Seems highly unlikely. He himself exudes little optimism and feels that "Khalistan will be born on a negative vote." He believes that issues like inquiry into the '84 riots and excesses by security forces are only irritants and a lasting solution will involve a principled settlement of problems like autonomy, sharing of river waters and territories. But he adds: "India does not have statesmen like Matternich, Bismark or Kissinger to solve the Punjab problem."

Nor does Mann belong to that league. With him there are no soft options. He wants peace, but on his own terms—which are incompatible with the Indian political system. Moreover, his inviolable belief in the greatness of Sikhism has led him to tell close aides that he would be happier being a leader of the Sikhs than chief minister. But he is unlikely to take up arms, and will perhaps instead try and internationalise the Sikh issue.

Ultimately, unless Mann learns to bend a little in order to iron out dissent in his own party or negotiate a peace settlement, his future in Punjab politics is bleak. In that case, he will either become more hawkish and intractable, or the contradictions that cleave him may see him joining the ranks of Sikh leaders who held out hope, only to disappoint—or be killed.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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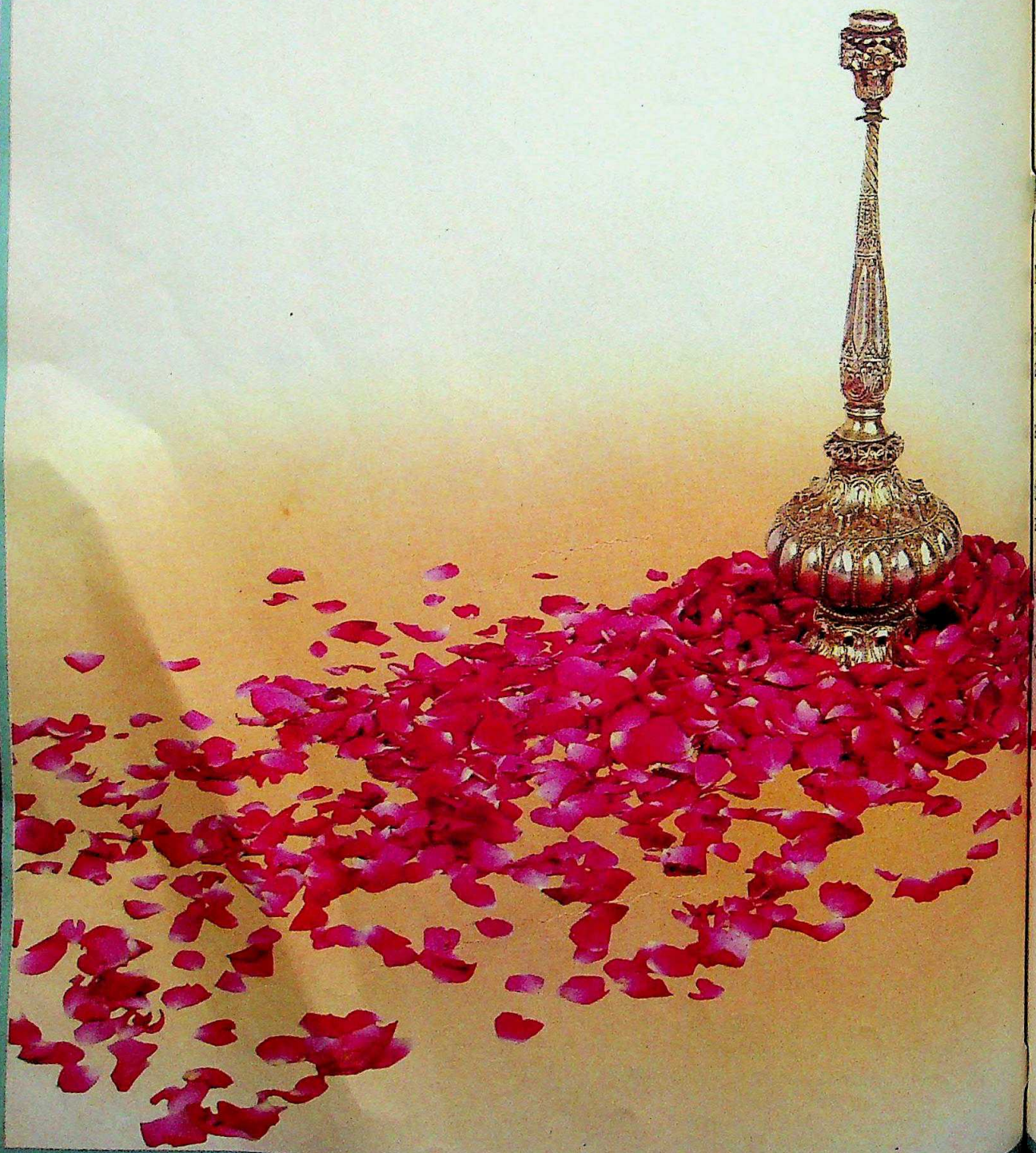

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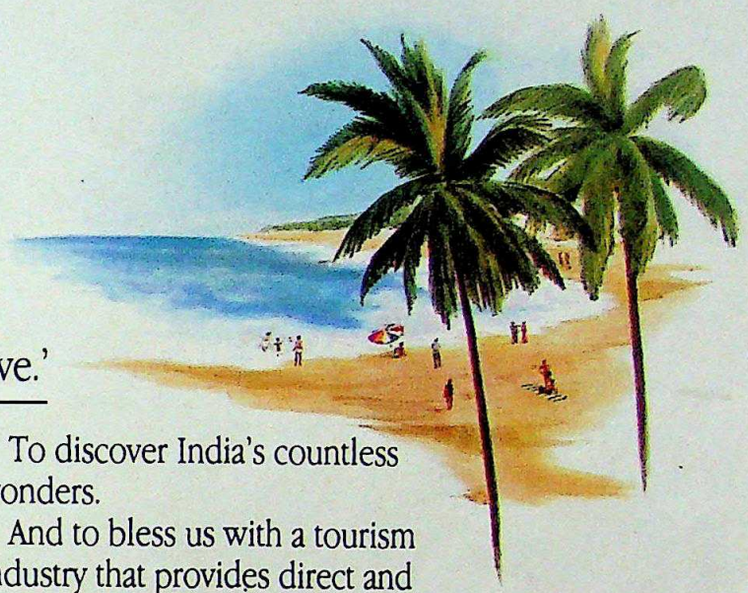

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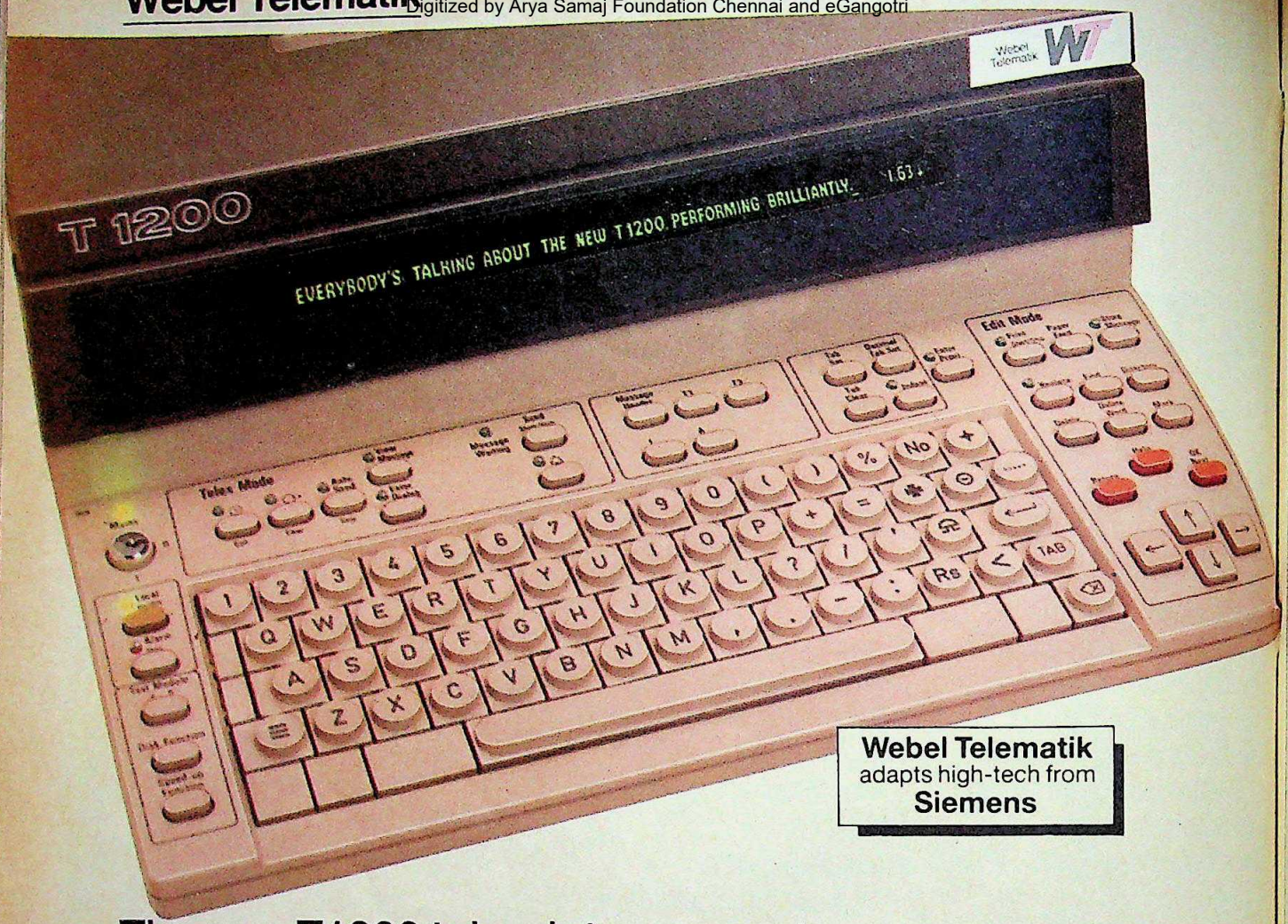

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HURDLE IN NOCIL'S PATH

THE fate of the massive Rs 1,832-crore expansion project of National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd (NOCIL) at Thane near Bombay hangs in the balance as the Ministry of Environment and Forests may raise uncomfortable questions. Official approval for the expansion scheme—which will increase the Mafatlal group flagship's ethylene producing capacity fourfold to 3 lakh tonnes per year—has been hanging fire for three-and-a-half years. Shortly before the Lok Sabha elections, the Industry Ministry granted a letter of intent for the project. However, with one wing of the Government now asking for a more detailed joint environment protection report from the company and its foreign collaborator Shell of the Netherlands, and with a group of local environmentalists planning to move the Supreme Court to stall the project, NOCIL is keeping its fingers crossed.

LINES TO THE WEST

INDIA may soon join the ranks of Pacific rim countries including Taiwan and South Korea as a supplier of finished electronic goods to the West. A giant American telecommunications corporation recently sent a consultant here to ascertain whether up to one million telephone instruments could be supplied each year on an ongoing basis. The value of the order: an impressive $16 million (Rs 270 crore). What's more, it won't just be assembly of imported components using cheap labour here. While the import content of each phone instrument will be under 25 per cent, the extent of indigenous value addition will be upwards of 60 per cent. The companies which have already been approached include Bharti Telecom, Tata Keltron and Swede India. If the order materialises, it will be great news for these companies: their turnover could double. Indications are that the export contract will be finalised in late-February.

CHIPPING IN WITH CASH

ESTER India Limited, the Nainital-based company producing polyester chips, film and filament yarn, has been incurring large cash losses ever since it commenced commercial production in July 1988. If, however, the company's recent performance is any indication, Ester may not be perpetually doomed to remain in the red. Between July 1988 and March 1989, Ester recorded a loss of nearly Rs 5 crore on a turnover of Rs 44 crore. Whereas losses stood at Rs 1.6 crore last July, in January this year, for the first time, a cash profit of Rs 25 lakh is expected. Whether this trend will be maintained in the months ahead is not certain. In the hope of shoring up its bottom line, Ester hopes to start production of speciality polyester chips used for plastic bottles. Company sources also claim that an additional investment of Rs 50 crore will be made on expanding yarn spinning lines.

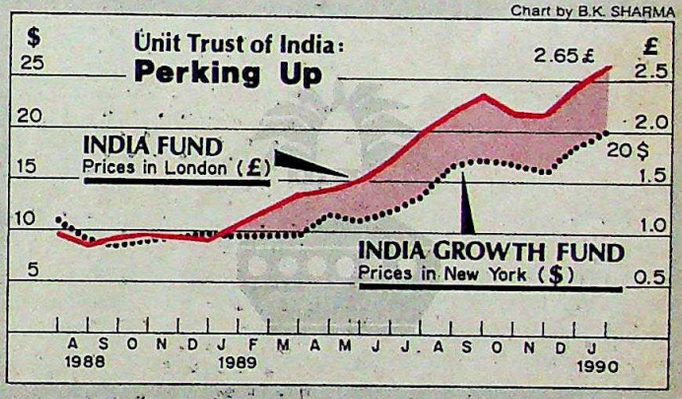
DOWN-MARKET ROOMS

THE hotel division of ITC Limited, Welcomgroup is thinking of following in the footsteps of its rivals, the Taj and Oberoi groups. Welcomgroup intends managing a chain of economy class hotels which has, somewhat ironically, been christened *Fortune*. It's already made the first moves, having signed memoranda of understanding with the owners of three hotels in Visakhapatnam, Trivandrum and Coimbatore and these will shortly be taken on lease. The company's strategy is not to build its own economy class hotels but only manage them.

SHARES GAIN TRUST

IF certain foreign investors are jittery about the economic policies that will be initiated by the new Government, others seem to have renewed their faith in the long-term future of the Indian economy. Witness the sudden spurt in the values of the two trust funds launched outside the country by the state-owned Unit Trust of India *(see chart)*. The India Fund, launched in London in August 1986, languished right

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



through 1987 and through most of 1988 before perking up last year. Then, before the elections, it slumped once again. But last fortnight, its £ 1 shares shot up to £ 2.65. The story is almost the same in the case of the India Growth Fund, launched in New York in August 1988. It seems to have got out of its year-long stupor and is currently being quoted at twice its face value of $10. As far as trust instruments go, that's pretty good going.

BANKING ON BONUS

FOR some time now, foreign banks operating in India have felt hamstrung by the shortage of skilled and experienced executives at the top and middle management levels. They have been using every trick in the book to snatch staffers from rivals. Of late, however, the banks are finding that their usual offers of huge hikes in salary, housing, transport and other lavish perquisites are not adequate to attract talent. So a new ploy has been devised: sign-on bonuses. Such bonuses entail payment of a lump sum (usually not less than Rs 50,000) on joining and, in some cases, the deal also includes a share of profits in the future. Recently, Bank of America is believed to have recruited five individuals on such fantastic terms. While such sign-on bonuses are common in many companies outside India, this is the first time it's happened here. With Bank of America showing the way, will other foreign banks be far behind?

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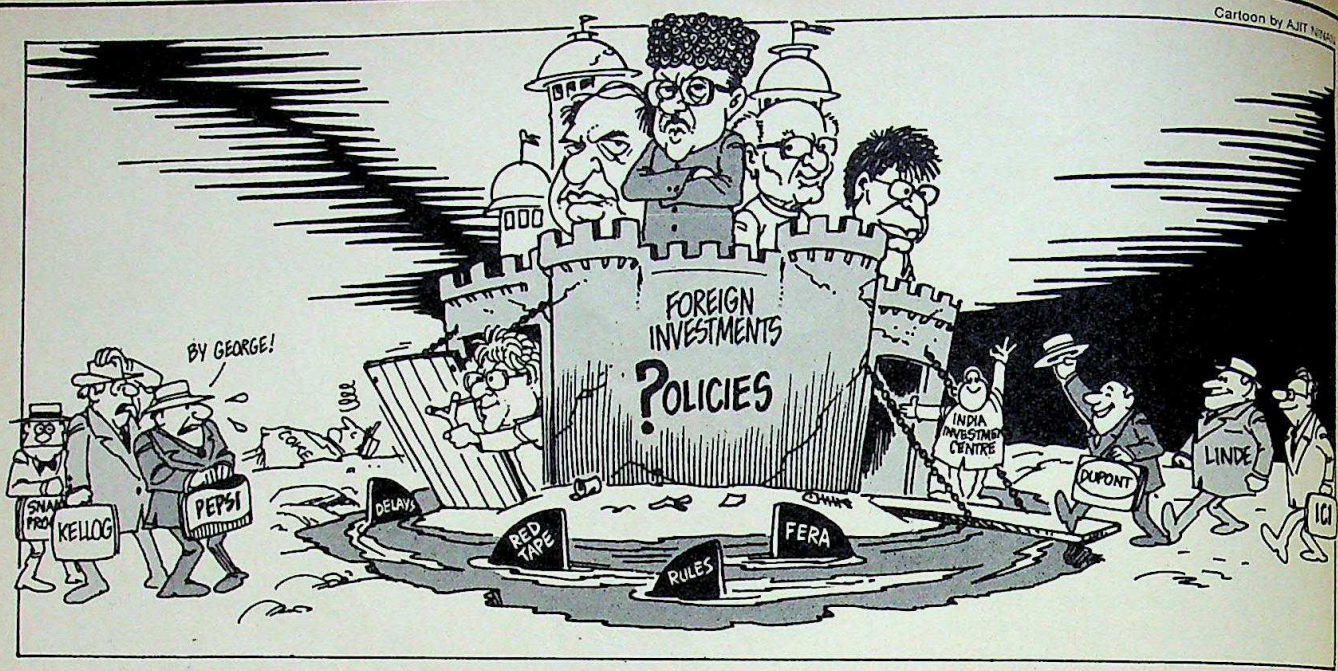


FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

Treading with Care

New Government's economic policies cause concern

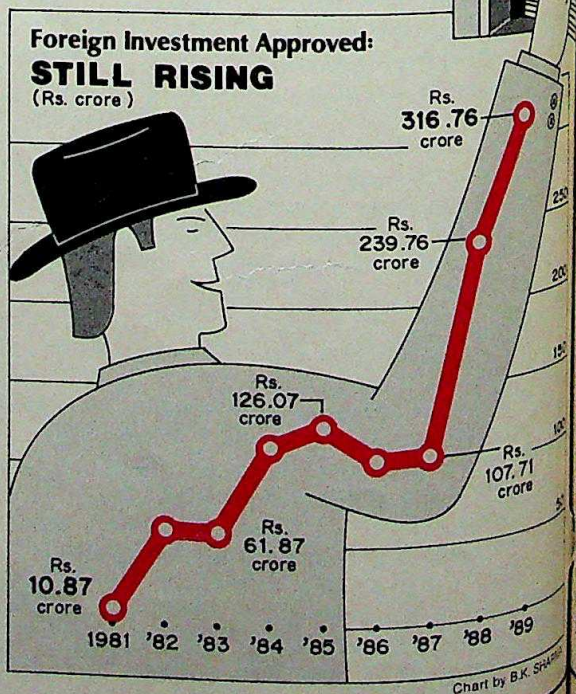
HOW has the international business community reacted to the new Government? One group, mainly comprising the Americans and Japanese, has expressed strong reservations about the V.P. Singh Government's attitude to foreign investment. Some have panicked. Others, including the West Germans, prefer to wait and watch, believing there will be a fair degree of continuity in the Government's economic policies, particularly those relating to foreign capital.

When, in early-February, Industry Minister Ajit Singh addresses an august gathering of businessmen from all over the world at Davos, Switzerland, he will seek to allay fears that the Government will reverse the Rajiv regime's liberalisation policies. This will be followed by a conference on foreign investment in New Delhi in mid-March organised by the Finance Ministry and the United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations.

For the time being, however, feelings are mixed. An American diplomatic source claims US companies are not actively pursuing new project proposals. Says he: "We are yet to get a clear answer to a crucial question. Does India want foreign investment?" In early-January, Caroline Beeson, executive director, US-India Business Council, wrote to industrialist Hari Shankar Singhania that the US businessmen found reports about the new Government's attitude to economic reforms and foreign investment "disconcerting". At around the same time, a group of Japanese businessmen told Indian officials they were "concerned, uneasy and anxious" about the Government's "socialistic and populist approach".

Shortly before he was sworn-in as Railway Minister, George Fernandes' off-the-cuff remarks about throwing out Pepsi from India received wide publicity in the foreign financial press. Compounding the uncertainty, the Commerce Ministry stalled imports of three heavy-duty tractors by Pepsi meant to increase tomato output on demonstration farms in Punjab. Then, customs authorities at Bombay port delayed the import of a tomato processing line, raising disputes about the capacity of the plant.

Result: the Pepsi project due to be launched on April 1 will be delayed by two or three weeks. Says Ramesh Vangal, managing director of Pepsi Foods Pvt Ltd: "We feel that consistency in the rules and regulations followed by the Government is critical and we are anxiously watching the situation." But despite the noises made by a few government functionaries and a few pinpricks, the consensus is that the project



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will go through smoothly.

Still, Fernandes' utterances have apparently sent out the wrong messages. US food giants like Heinz, Kellog and McCornick seem to be having second thoughts about coming to India. Which is not to say that other foreign concerns are not queueing up to come to India. The US pesticides company W.R. Grace has decided to apply to the Reserve Bank to set up a representative office here. Thapar group sources are confident its nylon project to be set up with Du Pont will be cleared soon.

The West Germans too seem to be in an upbeat mood having pipped the US in the country-wise list of foreign investment approved by the Government *(see box)*. Norbert H. Holl, first counsellor, economic, in the West German Embassy emphasises that no new German project has been delayed or dropped on account of the change in Government. "Our companies are not here to make a quick buck or to sell stockings or lipstick—we have established high-tech joint ventures in what India considers priority areas," says he.

Not all Germans are so optimistic. Says H. Brenneiser, managing director, Bayer India Ltd: "It is a little early in the day to comment on the new Government's likely stand on foreign investment, but from the early signals we have been getting, I am not very encouraged." But other foreign companies seem unwilling to go along with such bleak prognoses. Says Jahar Sengupta, chairman, ICI India Ltd: "We are not allowing ourselves to become agitated by the stray statements of individual ministers because we feel they do not constitute official policy statements of the Government as a whole."

Bankers too are not pessimistic. Says R. Cottrell, director, venture capital, ANZ Grindlays Bank: "The initial response to the new Government was, I believe, a knee-jerk reaction." Rana Kapoor, vice-president, Bank of America, concurs: "The flow of investment queries continues unabated. Even if there is a shift in the new Government's priorities, most new foreign investors feel liberalisation will continue."

Not surprisingly, Indian Government officials argue along similar lines. "The policies of liberalisation have evolved over the last seven years or so and they cannot and will not be reversed overnight," remarks P.S. Bhatnagar, secretary, Indian Investment Centre, the government agency which monitors foreign investment.

A spokesman of the Confederation of Engineering Industry asserts that the flow of foreign investment in the engineering sector will not slow down in the next five years. "What we want is quicker decision-making and clear-cut official pronouncements identifying areas where foreign investment is welcome and areas where it is not." In fact, what continues to irk foreign investors is not so much the verbal slanging occasionally indulged in by ministers as the interminable and complex bureaucratic procedures.

Indian industry sources also contend that what really bothers investors from countries like Japan, UK and France is the new Government's emphasis on self-reliance. Says a highly-placed observer: "There are strong indications that the new Government will discourage turnkey-type projects in core sectors like power, steel, oil and gas and fertiliser financed by bilateral aid—this is what threatens certain foreign investors more than the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act." The fear may not be totally unfounded. For instance, the Italian giant, Snamprogetti, and its Danish associate Haldor Topsoe have been told in no uncertain terms that their technological stranglehold on fertiliser projects will be ended.

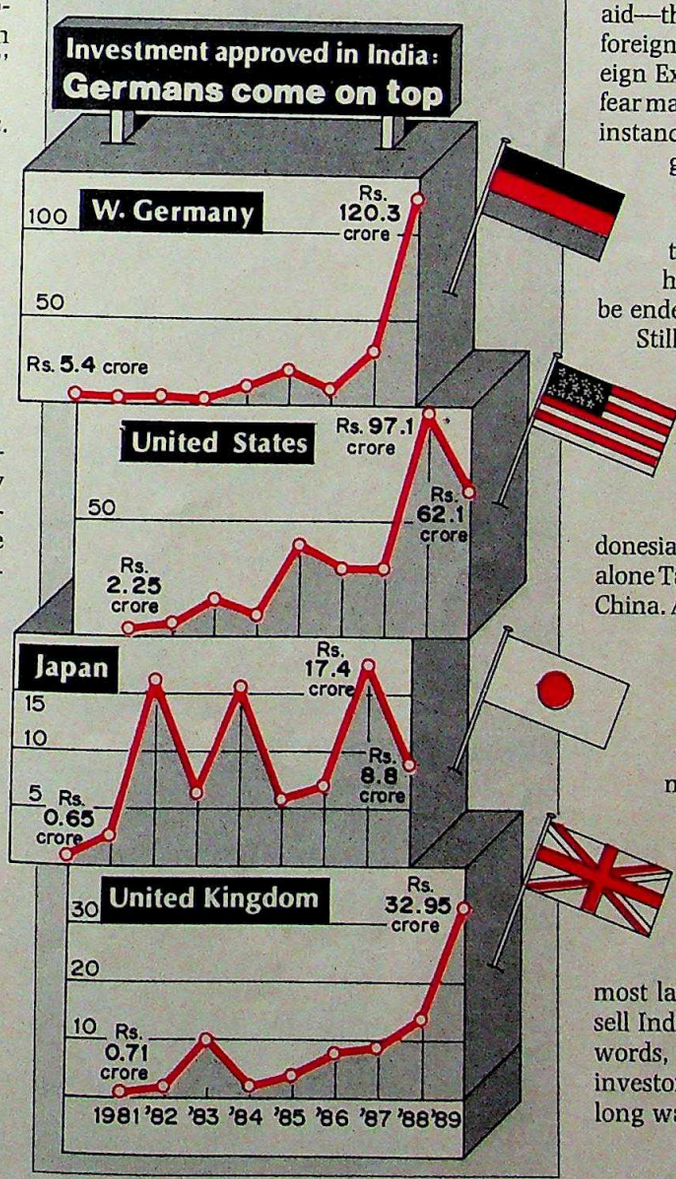
Still, the fact remains that India cannot afford to send unfriendly signals. Even now, India attracts very little foreign investment in comparison to countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, leave alone Taiwan and South Korea or even China. After the Tiananmen Square incidents in May-June last year, the focus shifted to some extent from China to India. Now with East Europe opening up, a lot of international finance is expected to flow there. Says Rajiv Desai, head of the public relations organisation, Indian Public Affairs Network: "India is still marginal in the scheme of things of most large multinationals—we must sell India more vigorously." In other words, as far as attracting foreign investors is concerned, we still have a long way to go.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with bureau reports

BLITZKRIEG

FOR the first time in recent memory, West Germany heads the list of countries investing in India, displacing the US. Last year, American investment approvals stood at Rs 62 crore—just under half the Rs 120 crore worth of German investment proposals approved.

The sudden spurt in German proposals can be attributed to the Technogerma exhibition held in New Delhi in March 1988. However, the figures put out include investment 'approved' by the Indian Government—which is not the same thing as investment actually made. Also, the German figure has been inflated by the inclusion of a single large project: the proposed export-oriented petrochemicals plant to be set up near Madras by Linde and RPG Enterprises controlled by R.P. Goenka. With Goenka's plate more than full with his group's involvement in the Haldia petrochemicals project, the question is: how soon will the Madras project come up?



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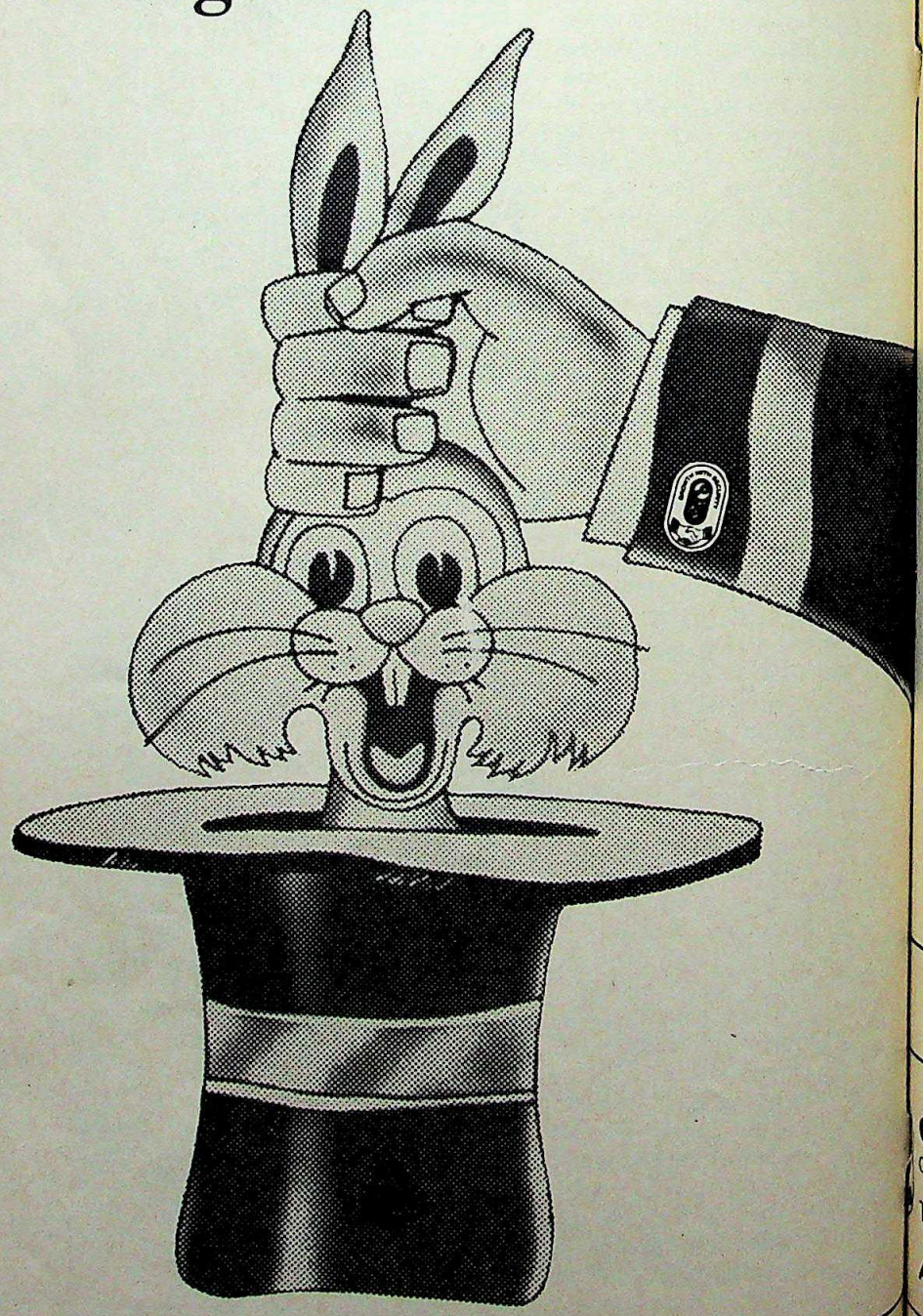

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SOYA INDUSTRY

Full of Beans

Boom in production

IT is boom time once again for the infant soya bean processing industry. Having recorded an astounding 150 per cent growth from 1988 to 1989, the slump that crippled the industry in 1986-87 is over. In fact, during the last season, the accumulated losses of most of the 50-odd processors were wiped off.

And the current year looks equally promising. G.L. Agrawal, chairman of the Rs 58-crore Indore-based Premier Industries Ltd, is optimistic: "We are on a fast growth track."

Indeed, growth has been stupendous. Production doubled from 8 lakh tonnes in 1987-88 to 16 lakh tonnes the next year. This year it is expected to be over 19 lakh tonnes. As a result, capacity utilisation in the soya processing industry, which was 17 per cent at one time has touched a high of 80 per cent. Last season, there was a record crushing of 9.57 lakh tonnes, compared to 5.69 lakh tonnes in 1987-88.

A fall-out of the production boom was the rise in soya meal export from Rs 88 crore in 1987-88 to an all-time high of Rs 273 crore last season. According to the Soyabean Processors' Association of India (SOPA): "Indian soyabean meal has established itself in the international market and domestic consumption is also picking up."

RAGHU RAI

A soya field in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh

Soya, which is 18 per cent oil and 42 per cent protein, is a popular cash crop in Madhya Pradesh—the state accounts for 80 per cent of the country's production and 90 per cent of its processing units. Cultivation began only in the last decade but already it generates almost Rs 1,000 crore annually for the farmers. While the soya oil is sold in the domestic market, the soya meal is exported as cattle feed.

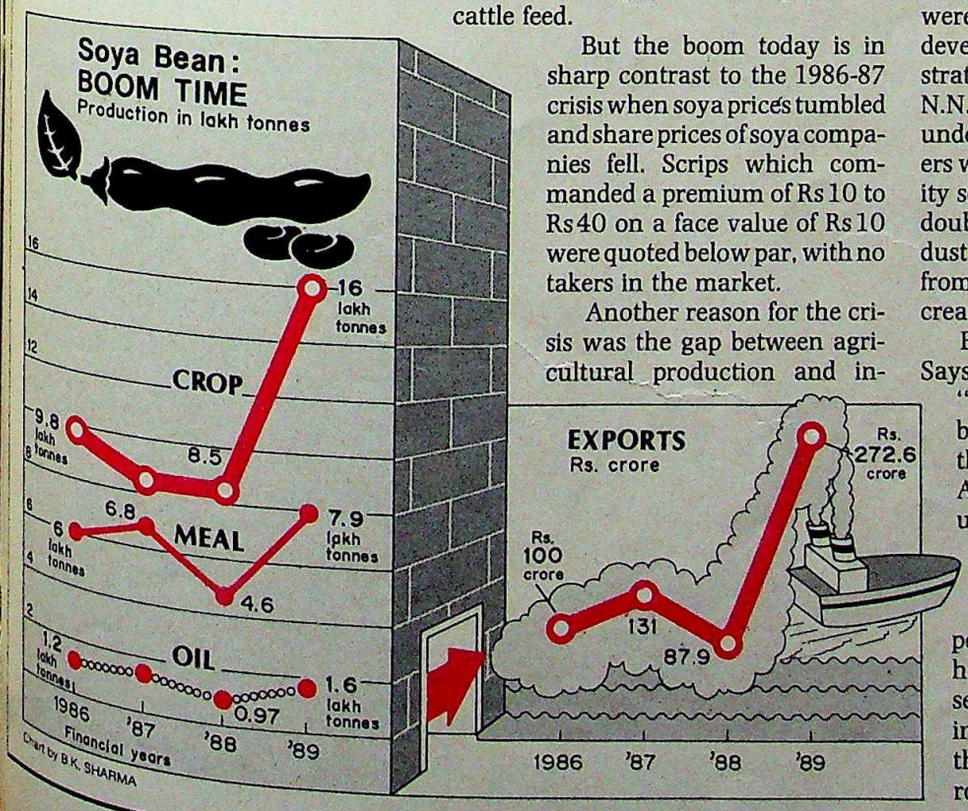
But the boom today is in sharp contrast to the 1986-87 crisis when soya prices tumbled and share prices of soya companies fell. Scrips which commanded a premium of Rs 10 to Rs 40 on a face value of Rs 10 were quoted below par, with no takers in the market.

Another reason for the crisis was the gap between agricultural production and installed capacity. While installed capacity shot up from one lakh tonnes to 34 lakh tonnes with three dozen new companies entering the field between 1985 and 1986, soya bean production remained static. In 1987, the industry's installed capacity was 34 lakh tonnes but the seventh plan production target for soya beans by 1990 was merely 14.4 lakh tonnes. SOPA Chairman M.P. Mansinghka had warned as early as in 1983: "Excess capacity not only pushes up production cost, it also implies wasteful use of funds obtained from public financial institutions."

Shortage of quality seeds also adversely affected production. Soya yields were, in fact, just about half that in developed countries. SOPA then evolved a strategy to deal with the crisis. Explained N.N. Jain, former SOPA chairman: "We undertook extension work among farmers which included supply of good quality seeds. This coupled with good rains doubled production last year." The industry also received a boost last year from the shortage in the world market created by the drought in the US.

But the problems are far from over. Says O.P. Goyal a soya plant owner: "There is still a gap of 20 lakh tonnes between the installed capacity and the availability of the raw material." And the domestic market is yet to pick up. Says a SOPA spokesman: "The picture for the industry seems rosy but it would have been rosier if problems such as congestion at ports and non-availability of rakes hadn't surfaced during the crushing season." Nevertheless, with the soya industry's teething troubles over, things can only be expected to get rosier.

—N.K. SINGH



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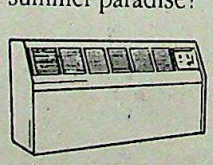
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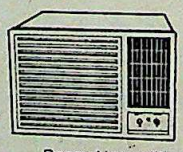
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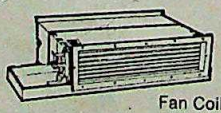
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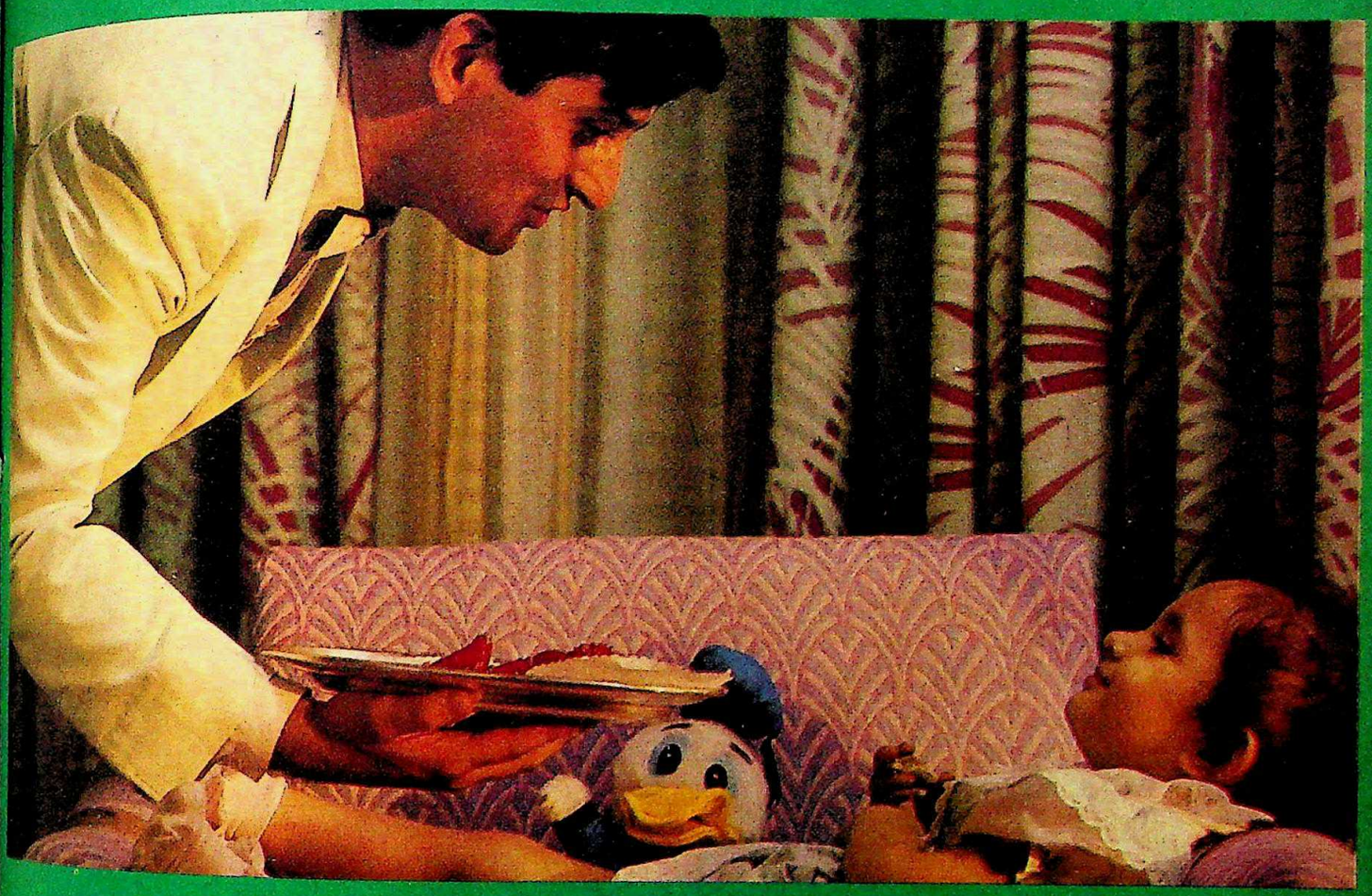

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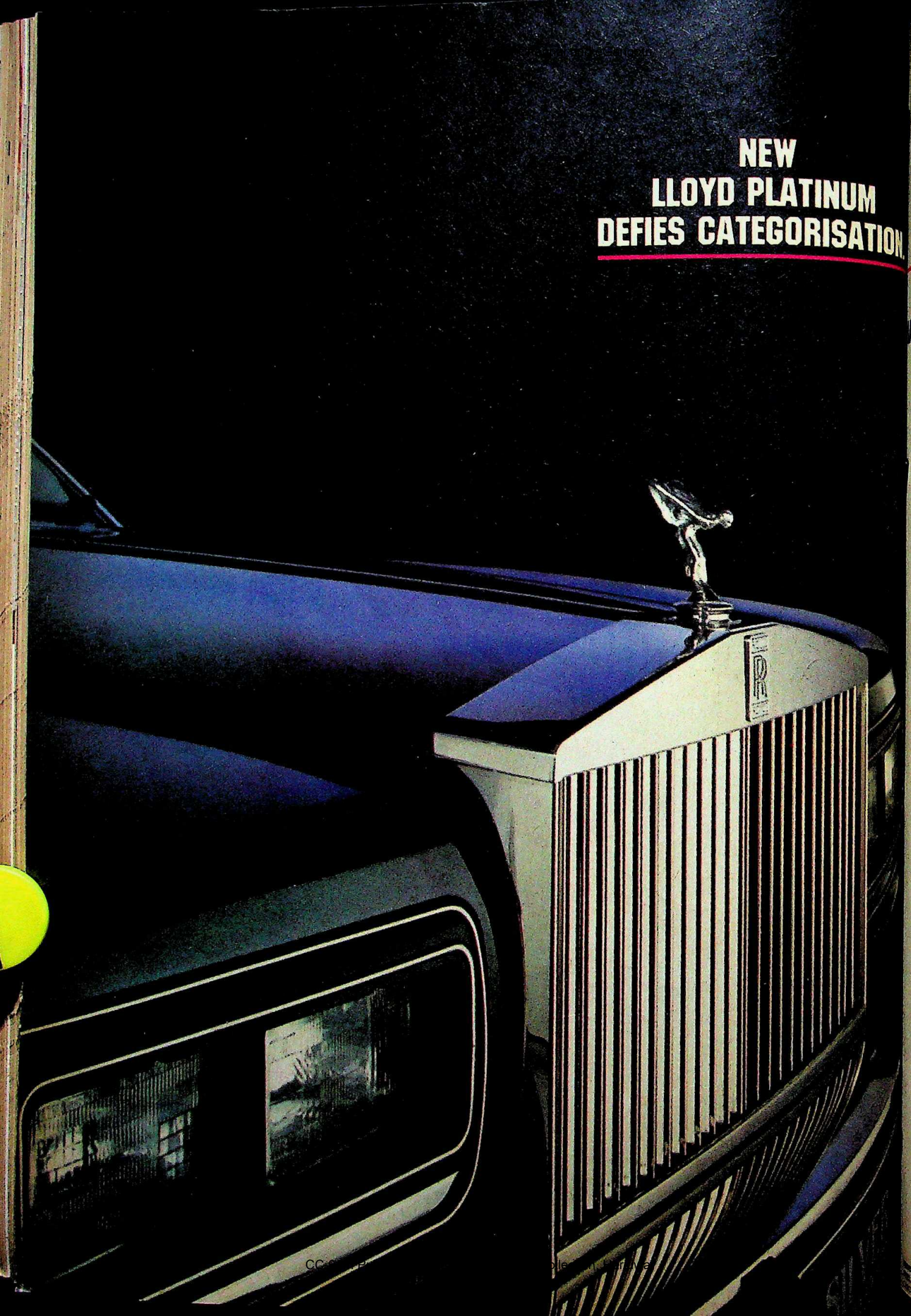
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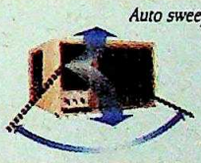

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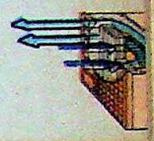

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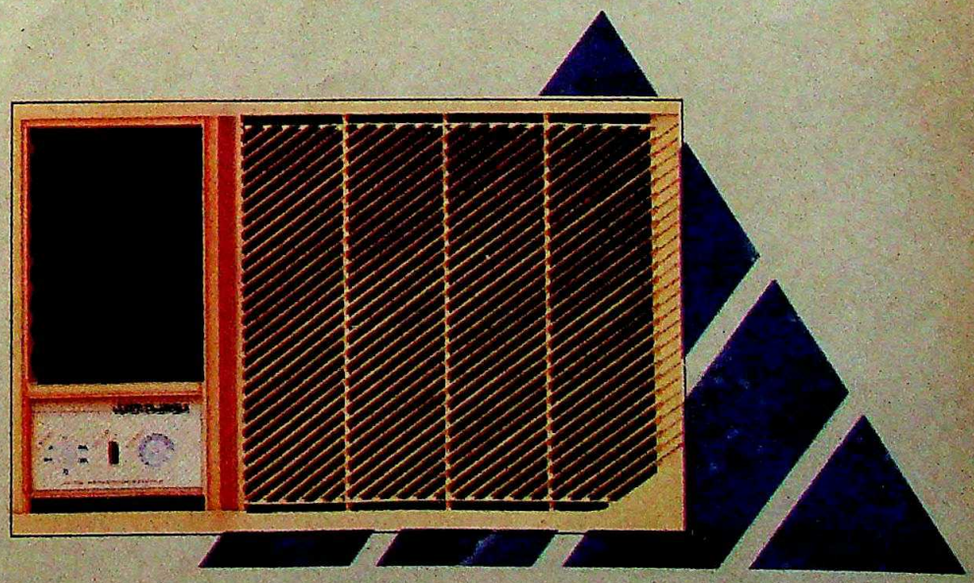

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RELIANCE

Under Scrutiny

Review of decisions ordered

THE V.P. Singh Government has fired the first salvo against Reliance Industries Limited. On January 12, the Collector of Customs, Bombay, A.M. Sinha appealed to the Customs, Central Excise and Gold Control Tribunal (CEGAT) against an order issued in January last year by his predecessor K. Vishwanathan. The order absolved Reliance of having evaded nearly Rs 120 crore of duty by deliberately undervaluing its imported polyester filament yarn (PFY) plant at Patalganga.

This is the largest customs duty evasion case of its kind in the country. If the charges levelled against the company stick, Reliance may eventually have to cough up more than Rs 120 crore. An additional Rs 60 crore could be levied as penalty.

Vishwanathan's order dropping charges against Reliance had been questioned by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in April last year. The Finance Ministry was asked to review it. But nothing came of it. The new Government when it came to power, decided to act on the PAC's recommendation. So, in late-December, Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) member K.P. Anand issued a fresh 29-page order which accused Vishwanathan of "inconsistent reasoning" and "grave" errors of judgement.

Anand further wrote that the CBEC was now of the view that Reliance had "illicitly imported" four yarn spinning lines and Vishwanathan had relied heavily on the views of a particular expert ignoring the views of other experts as well as various government departments. Anand felt the case against Reliance merited "severe penal action".

Vishwanathan has had to pay a stiff price. First, he suffered the humiliation of being ordered by CBEC to file an appeal against his own decision. Secondly, he was summarily transferred.

The former government was not particularly keen on taking action against Reliance despite what its own officers had recommended. The February 1987 show-cause notice alleged that Reliance, in the name of importing spare parts and 'balancing' equipment, had managed to more than double its PFY capacity in an unauthorised manner. On many occasions Reliance tried to obtain stay orders from courts restraining the customs authorities from proceeding against it, but failed everytime.

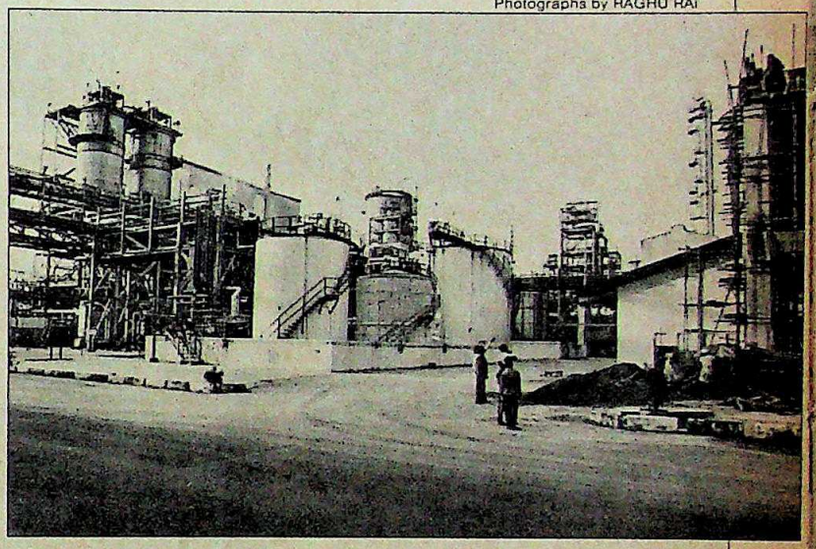
Adjudicating the case, Vishwanathan had gone along with Reliance's contention that its PFY plant's capacity was just over 25,000 tonnes per annum. The show-cause notice had, however, alleged that the capacity was around 55,000 tonnes. And a technical committee of the Government's Directorate General of Technical Development argued that the plant's capacity was more than one lakh tonnes.

While Vishwanathan had agreed with Reliance that its capacity was based on the Patalganga plant producing 40 denier (a measure of thickness) yarn, the CBEC has categorically rejected this argument. Anand's order cites a number of precedents according to which the capacity of any synthetic yarn plant should be calculated on the basis of tonnage and not denierage of the yarn spun.

The new Government's decision to re-examine this case came in a bit of rush. Reason: the CBEC can appeal against a collector's order only within a year. Hence, the tearing hurry to file the appeal before the end-January deadline. When contacted, sources close to the Ambanis said it appeared that the Government preferred to talk about the case to the press first and then the concerned company. Nevertheless, the Government is expected to initiate fresh action on some of the other cases pending against Reliance.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

Photographs by RAGHU RAI



Dhirubhai Ambani; and Patalganga plant: in for trouble

CHRONOLOGY

August 1981: Reliance imports a PFY plant valued at Rs 27.5 crore which is supposed to have a 10,000-tonne capacity.

December 1984: Additional equipment worth Rs 20 crore imported, ostensibly to increase capacity to 25,125 tonnes.

February 1985: Another spinning machine valued at Rs 13.2 crore is imported.

May-June 1986: *Indian Express* reports allege that the plant has been undervalued.

December 1986: Customs authorities inspect the plant.

February 1987: A show-cause notice is served on Reliance.

March 1987-January 1988: Reliance seeks to restrain customs authorities from proceeding against it in courts but fails; Reliance is asked to reply to the notice by March 1988.

May 1988: Bombay Customs Collector S. Mukhopadhyay is replaced by K. Vishwanathan.

January 1989: Vishwanathan absolves Reliance.

April 1989: The PAC suggests review of Vishwanathan's order.

December 29, 1989: The CBEC directs Vishwanathan to apply to CEGAT for a review of his own order.

January 2, 1990: Vishwanathan is transferred; A.M. Sinha takes his place.

January 12, 1990: Sinha appeals to CEGAT in New Delhi to review his predecessor's order as per PAC suggestion.

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Range of new wares in the market: crunchy choice

BISCUITS

Seeking the Big Bite

Creamy profits attract a bevy of large firms

TAKE an ancient recipe, add a dash of exciting new flavour and wrap it in a snazzy packet. What you have are crisp returns in the food industry's most popular segment: the Rs 1,200-crore a year biscuits business. The creamy profits being generated of late have attracted a host of large concerns.

Making a beeline for the lucrative upper end of the biscuits market are Kissan, Cadbury's, Lipton and Indodan Industries. And traditional bigwigs like Britannia and Parle—which account for over half the market—are wooing consumers with more exciting recipes, meticulous attention to quality and aggressive marketing strategies.

Result: biscuit sales are growing at a comfortable clip of 6 per cent per year. And the fancy cream-and-chocolate segment is growing even faster at 12 per cent. With the rural market still largely untapped, the growth rate could go up higher. Says H.S. Jalan, chairman of Indodan which recently diversified from ghee and instant coffee into biscuits: "The market is growing fast; there are more players and more competition."

Large companies are concentrating on the more expensive biscuits. For producers, profit margins in the upper segment average 5 per cent of turnover against 1 per cent in the cheaper, more price-sensitive segment which includes glucose biscuits. When biscuit production was reserved for the small-scale sector in 1977, big firms found the going rough. Within a decade, the 200-odd small units came to dominate the lower end of the market. Says S.H. Pherwani, a Bombay-based industry consultant: "Since small units have lower costs of production, large firms were forced to concentrate on high value biscuits."

Also, big biscuit companies are getting small units to manufacture biscuits, which they then market under their own brand name. Says K.K. John, vice-president, Kissan Products Ltd which started marketing biscuits last year: "Our aim is to create new biscuit flavours in the parent company and have these produced in the small units." Kissan recently introduced a chocolate-cum-mint flavoured biscuit and the exotic Florida Fantasy, an orange-flavoured cream biscuit. Lipton is wooing children with a Snackle wafer priced at just Re 1 per packet. And Indodan, hoping to cash in on its successful Gold Cafe coffee, plans to introduce the country's 'first' coffee-flavoured biscuit.

Even Cadbury's has realised the need to change its sales tack. In 1986, it entered the market with its lower-end Butter Glucose and Bournvita biscuits. Today, company Vice-President Vinod Dhawan admits: "The consumer reaction was mixed—they were not willing to pay more for the butter flavour and found Bournvita too bitter." Cadbury's executives now feel they stand a better chance at the premium end of the market. Last year Cadbury's launched ChocoBix followed by Simply Divine—an orange biscuit covered with rich milk chocolate. It claims it has already wrested over 8 per cent of the chocolate biscuit segment.

The traditional giants are also not keeping quiet. However, they would like to straddle the entire market. Says Sunil L. Alagh, managing director, Britannia Industries: "We wish to 'cream' the upper segment of the market and at the same time maintain our market share in the popular segments." Having introduced the elite Good Day and Pure Magic a year ago, Britannia launched a dirt-cheap Circus series priced even lower than glucose biscuits. And Patiala-based Bakeman's, the country's third largest biscuit manufacturer, is now concentrating its marketing efforts on high-value cream biscuits.

With increasing competition, companies are forced to spend more on marketing. This year, Indodan will spend about Rs 2 crore on television and radio advertising hoping to make a dent in the rural market. Alagh of Britannia points out that 1.5 per cent of the company's biscuit sales of around Rs 170 crore is spent on advertising. Attractive packaging too accounts for 15 per cent of the total cost of production.

Kissan has other sales strategies on the cards. It is providing a 50-paise discount coupon for customers who buy a second pack of biscuits. It is looking for a mere 1 per cent share in the biscuit market. But for a Rs 40-crore company, that would mean adding an extra Rs 12 crore to turnover. Meanwhile, for the first time, Lipton is contemplating the export of biscuits.

Not everyone is overjoyed with these developments. Says a small-scale biscuit manufacturer: "With more big boys entering the fray, our profits are getting squeezed and we are losing hopes of being able to one day effectively market our own products." Still, that should not unduly worry consumers. They should hopefully have more crunchy choices in the days ahead.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA and SHIV TANEJA

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Careers with ORG

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The Job

ORG has a host of plans for the immediate future, particularly in the areas of qualitative and quantitative research. And to help realise these plans of expansion and strengthening, challenging openings have been created at Bombay, Bangalore, Baroda, Bhubaneshwar, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. The areas include market research, development management, environment, public health, energy, econometrics, irrigation and information technology.

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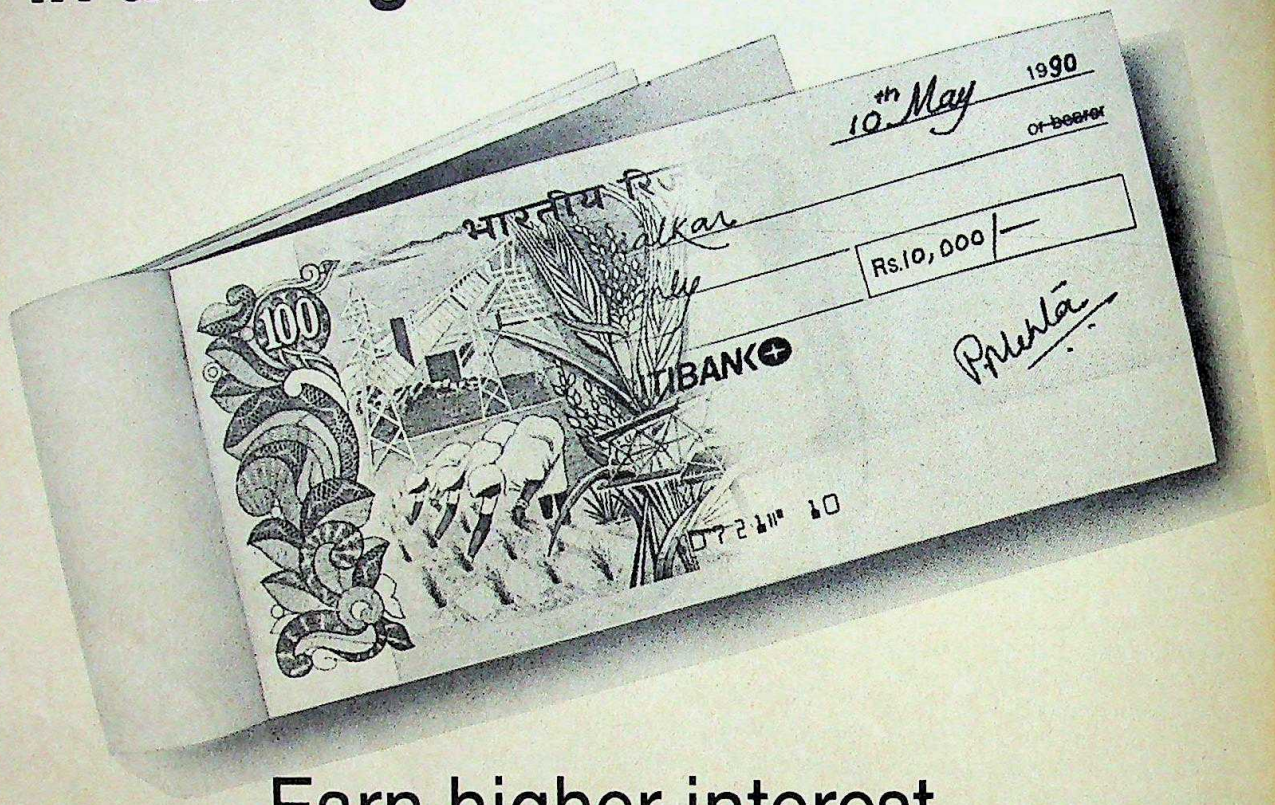

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Madras 768, Anna Salai. Tel: 860856, 866685

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KERALA

Share Rush

Investment boom in the state

KERALA seems to have taken a cue from Mikhail Gorbachev. Even as the Soviet leader is contemplating setting up a stock exchange in Moscow, Kerala is investing crores at the stock exchange. And while the left parties are trying to make political capital of it, the Keralite investor is sitting back to enjoy returns in hard cash—rather than abstract rhetoric.

Conversations are increasingly being anchored by investment trends and stock-market news. In fact, both the Venad Express and Island Express—which daily carry brokers to Ernakulam—have become popular places for fixing deals.

George Verghese, reader at the School of Management, Cochin University, says: "Keralites have been flush with money. Now they are prepared to take risks." That's why today many think that Kerala is an ideal place to sell and buy shares. And growth has been phenomenal. Between October '87 and October '88, Rs 100 crore were invested. This shot up to Rs 790 crore between October '88 and October '89. The daily turnover now at the Cochin Stock Exchange (CSE) is Rs 10 crore. The number of brokers has grown from 30 in 1986 to 474 in 1989. The number of assistants to brokers has increased from 36 in December 1988 to 724 today.

The CSE is one of the country's fastest growing stock exchanges. The average daily turnover in the Bombay Stock Exchange increased from Rs 67.98 crore in 1986 to Rs 117 crore in 1989. While at the CSE it grew from a mere Rs 2.01 lakh in 1986 to Rs 10 crore in 1989.

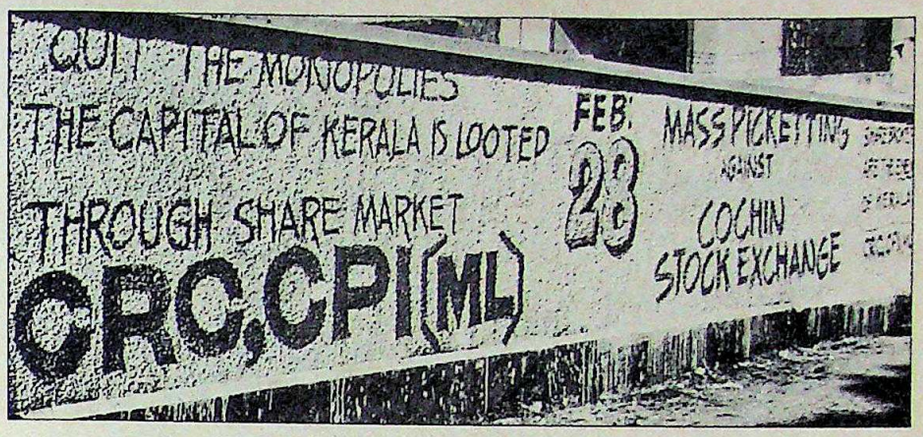
Most major companies are listed on the CSE today, including Hindustan Lever, Reliance, Telco, Tisco and Asian Paints. Brokers are opening offices in small towns like Tiruvalla, Changanachery and Muvvattupuzha. Says C.L. George, a leading share broker: "This is the best thing that ever happened to Kerala."

Cynthia Zacharias, a business graduate, some time back opted for the stock exchange instead of a career in management. Soon her sister Vimala Jose also joined in. Today both have separate offices. Says Cynthia: "If one studies the company before investing, one can never lose."

K. Samuel, 38, a repatriate from Nigeria, who never imagined he would join the share race in India, started investing in February '89. Today, he boasts of 12,000 shares.

Planters are a prominent group pumping in money to trade. Chacko Kallivayalil, a rubber planter from Mundakkayam became a broker in 1984. With the boom, his wife has also joined in to help.

Those returning from the Gulf also found it useful to invest in the stock exchange. Those still there used their NRI status—which granted them a special quota in getting shares allotted—to invest and earn high returns. Even the average investor saw the stock boom as welcome relief. Two years back, "blade" companies, offering high interest rates of 36 per cent suddenly crashed. The CSE offered a reliable investment alternative. Now, the investors didn't have to negotiate with Bombay or Calcutta brokers. Entering the CSE was less expensive, and simpler to work out in terms of transactions.



Anti-investment graffiti (above); brokers at the Cochin Stock Exchange

The share market boom has occurred partly because the state doesn't have too many other avenues of investment. Industrialists—both from within the state and outside—have been extremely wary of setting up shop because of a high wage structure, labour disputes, poor infrastructure and government red tape.

The boom has sparked off a political agitation organised by the CPI(ML)'s central reorganisation committee. The main complaint of leader Venu's break away Naxalite group, planning to demonstrate in front of the CSE: the investment boom is draining funds out of Kerala to help others while the state remains industrially backward. The graffiti on Cochin walls reads "capital looters of the state".

But the Keralite is in no mood to abandon the share rush. P.S. Joseph, president CSE, says: "The threat isn't going to affect trading at all." In fact, investor confidence is on the rise with the Federal Bank Ltd. having decided to underwrite public issues in Kerala. It has also started investor clubs attached to their branches to discuss forthcoming public issues and analyse company balance sheets. Public interest has also been helped by newspapers publishing stock-market reviews. And recent mega issues like Larsen and Toubro, Oswal Agro and Apollo Tyres have contributed immensely in catapulting the share-market boom to new heights.

—RAMESH MENON in Ernakulam

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THE MARKETS

Scrips Slide

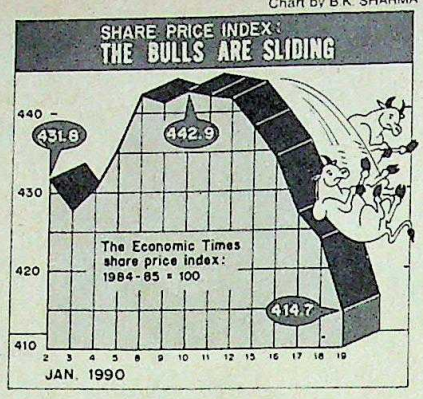
Bears on the rampage

IT was too good to last. After a fairly prolonged bullish phase which started soon after the V.P. Singh Government came to power and lasted till early January, the country's share markets went into a tailspin last fortnight. When similar bearish sentiments had prevailed in the recent past, the financial institutions invariably intervened to prop up scrip values. This time around, the situation was different.

A combination of factors prompted the institutions to act warily. And the decline in share prices, mainly anticipated after the December boom became relatively more pronounced. With Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate announcing that next year's budget would be presented in March-end (and not in May or June as earlier presumed) and with investors anticipating a stiff dose of taxation, the mood in the market turned distinctly downbeat.

The *Economic Times* all-India share index crashed by more than 28 points in the fortnight, from 442.9 on January 10 to 414.7 nine days later, a good 11 points below last year's peak of 426.3. The 100-scrip national index of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) behaved no differently. It touched a peak of 429.27 on January 8, but slumped to 394.58 when trading ended on January 19.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



What were the reasons for the failure of the financial institutions to shore up share indices? One was Dandavate's statement that the Government had received complaints about certain institutions using their clout in the markets to bring about an "artificial" rise in the values of particular scrips. Secondly, the official proposal to set up a board to recommend names of top personnel in banks and financial institutions was widely interpreted to mean that the Government was not happy with the present heads of the institutions.

Yet another reason why the institutions went on the defensive: spokesmen of the new Government were stressing that the role of the financial institutions in supporting last year's mega-issues was questionable and that these bodies would have to be "cleansed" of extraneous political influences. With this atmosphere of uncertainty, organisations like the Unit Trust of India, Life Insurance Corporation and General Insurance Corporation preferred not to go in for large-scale purchases of shares.

So the bears felt the time was ripe to go on the rampage. Speculators liquidated their positions and an estimated Rs 80 crore of non-specified cash scrips were off-loaded for delivery. The Government's decision to revise the customs duties on certain plastic materials also did not help matters. The Reliance scrip continued to slide, losing Rs 9.50 in the course of the fortnight.

Thus, it was clear that pre-budget blues had set into the markets. And investors searched vainly for a silver lining in the dark clouds looming on the horizon.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	1990 LOW	CLOSE 19.1.90	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	99.00	90.00	93.50	3.00 +
Associated Cement	355.00	331.00	334.00	10.00 –
Asian Paints	255.00	225.00	225.00	20.00 –
Atlas Copco	48.00	41.00	41.00	6.00 –
Bajaj Auto	417.50	381.25	395.00	7.75 +
Baroda Rayon	817.50	697.50	707.50	75.00 –
Bata India	77.50	70.00	73.00	4.00 –
Ballarpur	155.00	135.00	138.00	10.00 –
Bharat Forge	93.75	85.00	91.25	1.25 +
Birla Jute	66.00	56.00	57.00	6.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	231.00	202.00	204.00	18.50 –
Britannia Ind.	119.00	107.00	102.00	5.00 +
Brooke Bond	107.00	98.00	101.00	1.50 –
Century Spinning	2840.00	2540.00	2550.00	160.00 –
Chloride India	92.00	87.50	90.00	2.00 –
Colgate Palmolive	196.25	182.50	185.00	5.00 –
Cyanamid	115.00	95.00	102.50	2.50 -
DCM	53.50	48.00	50.50	2.50 +
Dunlop	75.50	63.75	66.00	6.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	62.00	63.00	2.00 –
Escorts	88.00	80.50	81.00	4.00 –
Finolex Cables	282.50	260.00	262.50	13.75 –
Food Specialities	122.00	103.00	105.00	15.50 –
Garware Nylon	69.00	57.00	58.00	2.00 –
G.E. Shipping	54.75	47.00	48.00	4.50 –
G.S.F.C.	185.00	160.00	162.50	16.25 –
Grasim Ind.	129.00	113.00	114.00	13.00 –
Hind. Aluminium	270.00	250.00	255.00	7.50 –
Hind. Ciba	1660.00	1170.00	1200.00	325.00 –
Cadbury India	172.50	148.75	152.50	15.00 –
Hindustan Lever	117.50	103.00	105.25	9.75 –
Hindustan Motors	31.30	24.00	28.80	2.80 +*
ICI India Ltd.	49.50	43.00	43.00	3.50 –
Indian Organic	58.75	47.00	50.00	nil
Indian Rayon	108.00	88.50	90.00	11.00 –
Indrol	246.25	196.25	215.00	5.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	245.00	215.00	220.00	15.00 –
ITC	64.00	55.50	58.50	2.50 –
J.K. Synthetics	67.00	59.00	61.00	4.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	155.00	137.50	151.50	0.50 –
Kirloskar Cummins	90.00	68.00	73.00	1.00 –
KSB Pumps	210.00	195.00	195.00	15.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	85.00	71.00	72.50	6.50 –
Lipton	112.00	91.00	92.00	17.00 –
LML Ltd.	21.00	17.00	18.00	1.50 –
Madura Coats	111.00	107.00	111.00	3.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	103.00	80.00	87.50	12.50 – *
Milk Food	280.00	210.00	230.00	10.00 – **
Motor Industries	1200.00	825.00	870.00	210.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	157.00	136.00	138.00	15.00 –
National Organic	1660.00	1360.00	1410.00	35.00 +
Nirlon	22.00	16.00	18.00	0.50 +
Orkay Silk Mills	20.50	16.50	17.25	0.75 –
Peico Electronics	32.50	25.50	28.50	0.25 –
Pfizer	113.75	87.50	91.00	16.50 –
Ponds	230.00	200.00	203.75	21.75 –
Premier Auto	74.50	63.00	64.50	5.00 –
Raymond	76.00	70.00	72.00	2.00 –
Reliance Industries	90.00	66.50	69.00	9.50 –
Siemens India	120.00	96.00	105.00	1.00 +
Shaw Wallace	92.00	79.00	80.00	10.00 –
Shriram Fibres	71.00	54.00	54.00	14.50 –
SKF Bearings	1570.00	1370.00	1380.00	70.00 –
SPIC	62.00	53.50	54.00	6.00 –
Tata Steel	119.75	107.00	107.75	6.95 –
Telco	130.00	117.00	117.50	10.50 –
Vam Organic	167.50	140.75	142.50	7.50 –
Videocon Int.	192.50	152.50	160.00	10.00 –
Voltas	785.00	680.00	690.00	40.00 –
Wimco	32.50	24.00	24.75	6.25 –

*Spot delivery **Ex-dividend

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	13.5781	13.4286
Austria	Shilling	100	140.4167	139.7204
Bahrain	Dinar	1	45.5451	44.4899
Bangladesh	Taka	100	54.2204	52.8318
Canada	Dollar	1	14.5779	14.4238
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.5788	2.5511
Egypt	Pound	1	6.8045	6.6823
France	Franc	1	3.0395	2.9630
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1871	2.1647
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9489	0.9340
Iran	Rial	100	25.5368	25.2559
Italy	Lira	100	1.3396	1.3229
Japan	Yen	100	11.9332	11.6414
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7907	0.7820
Kuwait	Dinar	1	58.2915	56.3539
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.3094	6.2442
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.1619	1.1462
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5961	0.5880
Netherlands	Guilder	1	8.8449	8.7506
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8133	0.8012
Singapore	Dollar	1	9.0578	8.9626
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1548	0.1527
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.7419	0.7319
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.7371	2.7072
Switzerland	Franc	1	11.2143	11.0933
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0949	0.0890
Thailand	Baht	100	67.2418	65.2748
UK	Pound	1	28.1136	27.8096
USA	Dollar	1	17.0794	16.9062
UAE	Dirham	1	4.6526	4.6016
USSR	Rouble	1	27.5253	27.2241
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	10.3734	10.1112

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 19.1.90.

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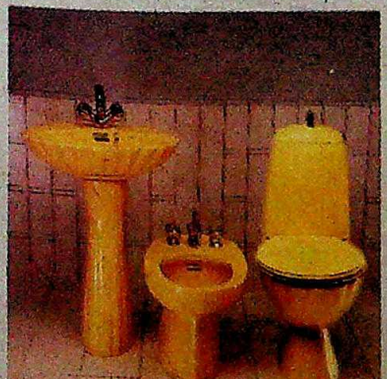
Conca Collection



The Crowne Collection — Water saving W.C. cisterns available in 5 and 6½ litres.

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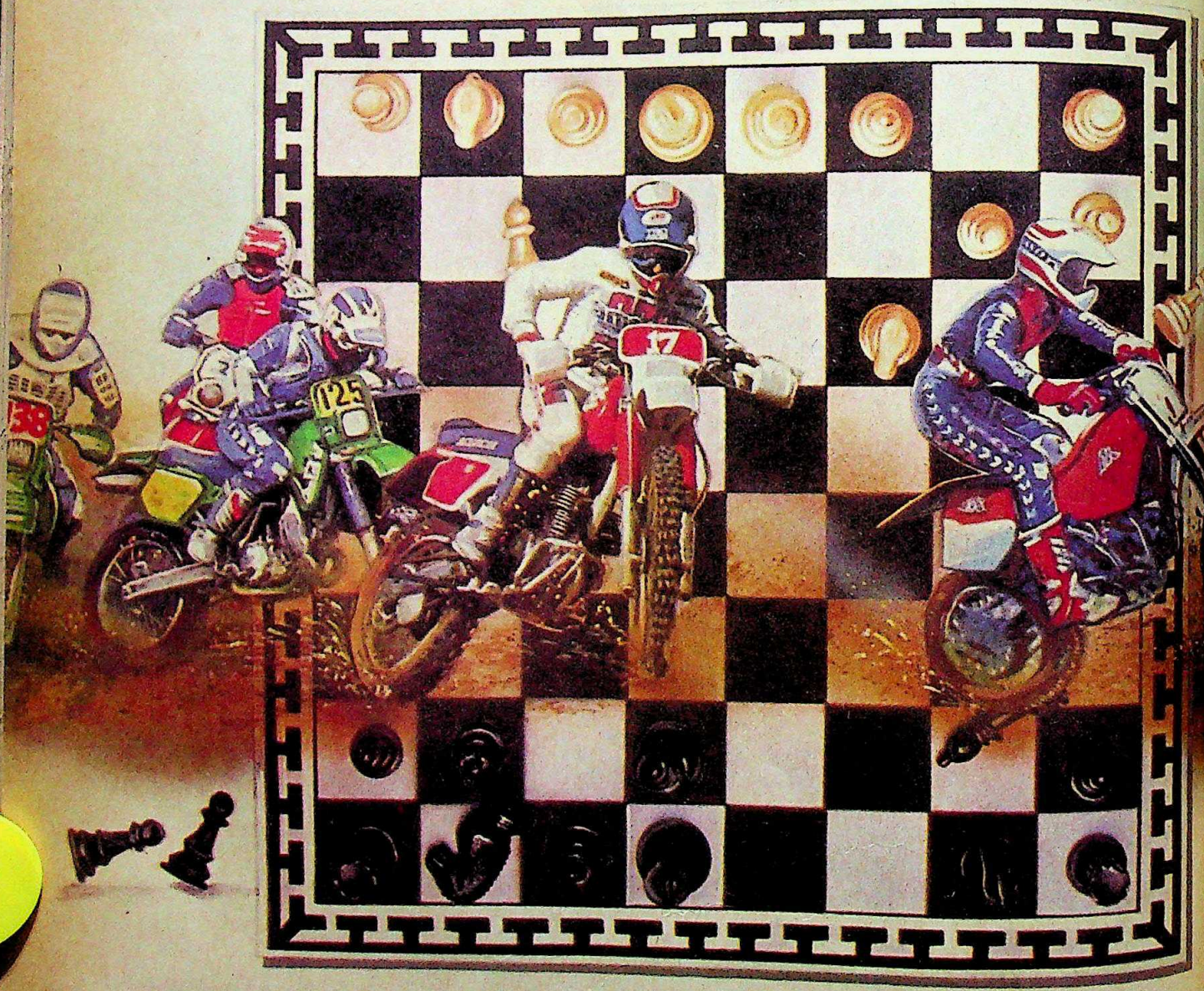

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Small Consolation

FORMER takeover tycoon R.P. Goenka is down in the dumps. Since 1985, he has struggled to become the main private promoter of the Rs 3,000-crore Haldia petrochemicals project. But last fortnight, he found that the rug had suddenly been pulled from right under his feet.

In what can easily be termed as an incredible coup, the Tata group clinched the issue. It won the hard-contested race

Goenka: left with the crumbs

not only because of its financial clout but also because it happens to be among the country's least controversial business houses.

What RPG Enterprises has been left with are merely the crumbs, in the form of a downstream plant or two. The West Bengal Government has, of course, made an attempt at assuaging feelings. The state Government has assured Goenka that the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation's 500-megawatt expansion scheme will be cleared expeditiously. But that's little consolation.

Official Trading

WHEN Bhupindar Singh and I.P. Hazarika, erstwhile heads of the State Trading Corporation (STC) and the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation (MMTC), were summoned to Udyog Bhavan and summarily asked to hand over charge to the then additional secretary in the Commerce Ministry, Surendra Singh, in mid-December, they were stunned. Reason: only a few days earlier, when the two former chiefs made elaborate presentations to Commerce Minister Arun Nehru, he gave them no inkling that their necks would soon be on the chopping block.

But that's exactly what happened.

I.P. HAZARIKA

S. SINGH

However, there was more than a touch of irony in what subsequently transpired. Surendra Singh, who started officiating as head of the country's two large public sector trading organisations, himself had to go in less than two weeks. He was reverted to his parent cadre, Uttar Pradesh. And another additional secretary, I.G. Jhingran, took his place. An example of poetic justice?

Changing Signals

THE World Bank had for many years refused to advance loans to India for purchasing components of telecommunication equipment. However, it was all too eager to aid projects involving imports of full telecom systems. Now, the World Bank has agreed to discuss the possibility of aiding the establishment of a 'bank' which will supply components and spares for the telephone switching systems that include main automatic exchanges and rural automatic exchanges.

The suggestion to set up a 'bank'—contained in a confidential report—is significant because the bank's earlier policy suited the interests of multinationals. Now that may change. It has also been suggested that the 'bank' advance loans for upgradation of equipment. Discussions will be held when bank officials arrive this month.

Dons vs Hoteliers

TWO senior bureaucrats, Tourism Secretary Manish Behl and Anil Bordia, secretary in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, are heading for a confrontation. The issue: whether or not to convert Shimla's Viceregal lodge—which has been housing the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies since 1966—into a hotel.

Earlier proposals to convert the lodge—a part of which is the official summer residence of the President—into a hotel were opposed by the institute. Now, the Tourism Department wants the public sector India Tourism Development Corporation to spend more than Rs 10 crore to revamp the Rs 100-crore property. But the Education Department is not amused.

With Bordia supporting the dons and Behl equally keen on setting up the hotel, a heated tussle is on the cards.

Fishing for Cooperation

PORTLY Commerce Minister Arun Nehru has adopted rather unusual means to convince his ministerial colleagues that they should cut through bureaucratic red tape and sink their differences to rapidly boost exports of marine products from India. For some time now, various wings of the Government—including the ministries of commerce, industry, agriculture, food processing and environment—have been at loggerheads with one another about the

Nehru: unusual bait

means to be adopted to increase fish output from the coastal areas.

What Nehru recently did was to drastically hike next year's target for marine foods exports from Rs 600 crore to Rs 2,000 crore. And he did not stop with setting ambitious targets. He sent huge fish specimens—each weighing more than 2 kg—to six of his fellow ministers. To each glorious specimen was attached a small note which stated that this was the delicious stuff which people all over the world could not partake of because of India's failure to export more fish. The bait seems to have been immensely successful in hooking support. All six, including Devi Lal, Ajit Singh and Sharad Yadav, got back to Nehru suggesting that he convene a meeting promptly to sort out inter-ministerial differences on promoting exports of marine foods.

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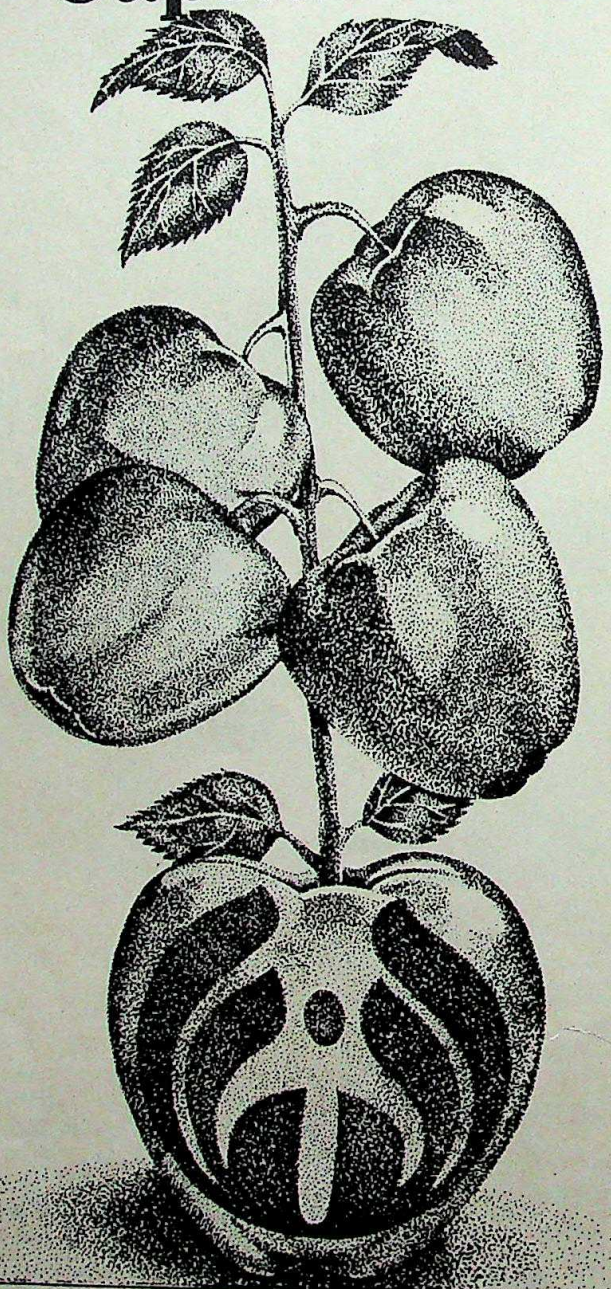

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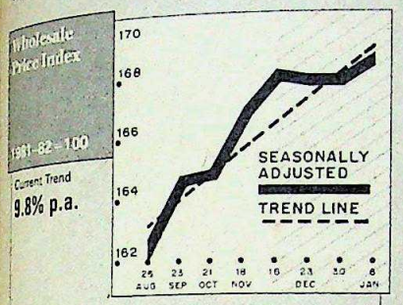
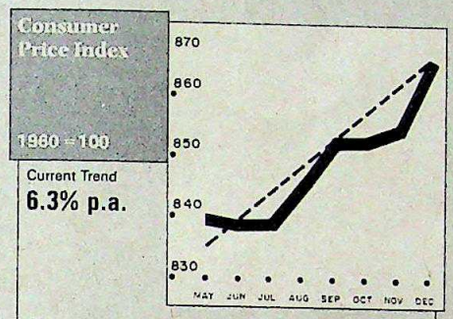
The rise in wholesale prices continued at above 10 per cent last fortnight and consumer prices showed an even higher inflation rate. High growth in money supply and a large budget deficit will make it very difficult to bring prices under control this year—particularly if the monsoon is bad too. The sharp and sustained growth in exports provides the best news on the economy this fortnight. However, if the exchange rate is not changed continuously the export boom may not last long.

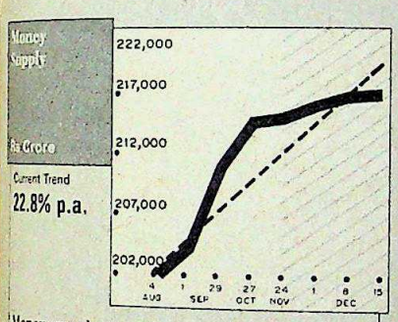
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



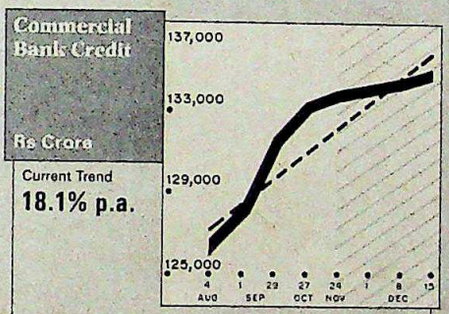
Inflation showed no sign of slowing down—and last fortnight witnessed a double digit annualised rate.



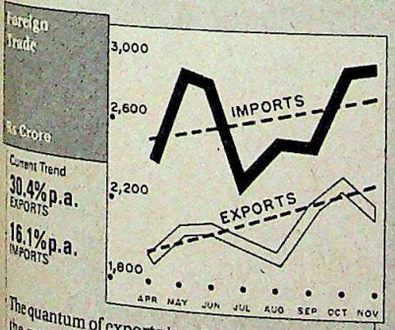
Consumer prices registered an unwelcome sharp upward rise last month—a 16 per cent annualised rise.



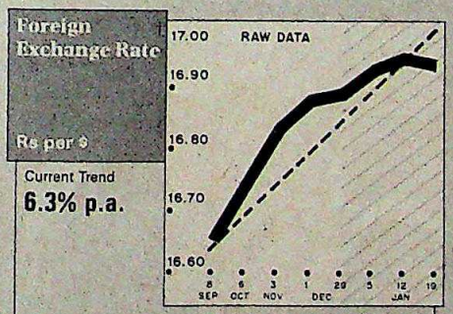
Money supply was kept under control last month, but the long-term rate continues to be dangerously high.



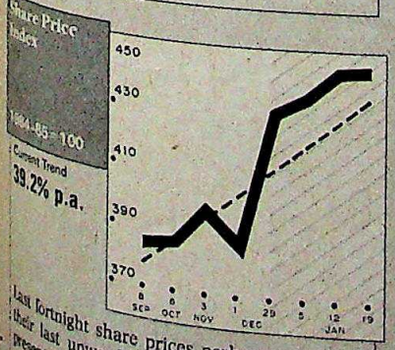
Bank credit to the commercial sector was tightened over the last fortnight making liquidity conditions difficult.



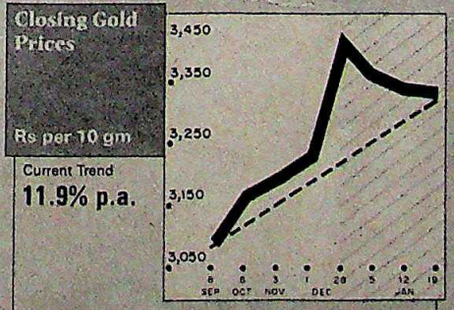
The quantum of exports is going at almost twice the rate of imports—a trend that is certainly welcome.



The rupee remained stable against the dollar—and the trend of devaluation seems to have levelled off.



Last fortnight share prices perhaps witnessed their last upward fling before the budget is presented.



The bullion market remained stable last fortnight—ending the rising trend that was shown last month.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of December, 1989

	% Growth
Dry Cells	8.14
Bananas	7.62
Logs Timber Bamboo	7.40
Tea	6.89
Turmeric	4.57
Pesticides & Insecticides	4.25
Groundnut Seeds	2.67
Gingelly Seeds	2.48
Oranges	2.36
Copra	2.30
Groundnut Oilcake	2.17
Barley	2.05
Tobacco Raw	1.98
Betel-Nuts	1.84
Jute Textiles	1.63
Eggs	1.35
Maize	1.25
Ball Bearing	0.81
Gingelly Oil	0.77
Butter	0.76
Coffee	0.74
Cotton Cloth	0.74
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.65
Linseed	0.52
Electricity	0.48
Transformers	0.34
Cement	0.33
Cashew-Nut	0.28
Ceramic Tiles	0.08
Cotton Raw	0.07
Synthetic Fibres	0.07
Pipes & Tubes	0.00
Coir Yarn	0.00
Plates & Sheets	0.00
Steel Structurals	0.00
Rails	0.00
Bars & Rods	0.00
Pig Iron	0.00
Dyeing Materials	0.00
Nylon/Terene and Mixed Cloth	0.00
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.00
Soda Ash	0.00
Tubes	0.00
Camel Back	0.00
Phosphatic Fertilisers	0.00
Bulk Drugs	0.00
Paper	0.00

Of the 139 series considered, 31 of them with a total weight of 46.039 had a positive growth and 39 of them with a total weight of 38.621 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, December	19200	19220
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, December	801.5	809.0
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, December	3928	3942
Fertilisers		
Thousand Tonnes, December	890.1	900.7
Plant Load Factor		
Per Cent, December	60.3	58.0

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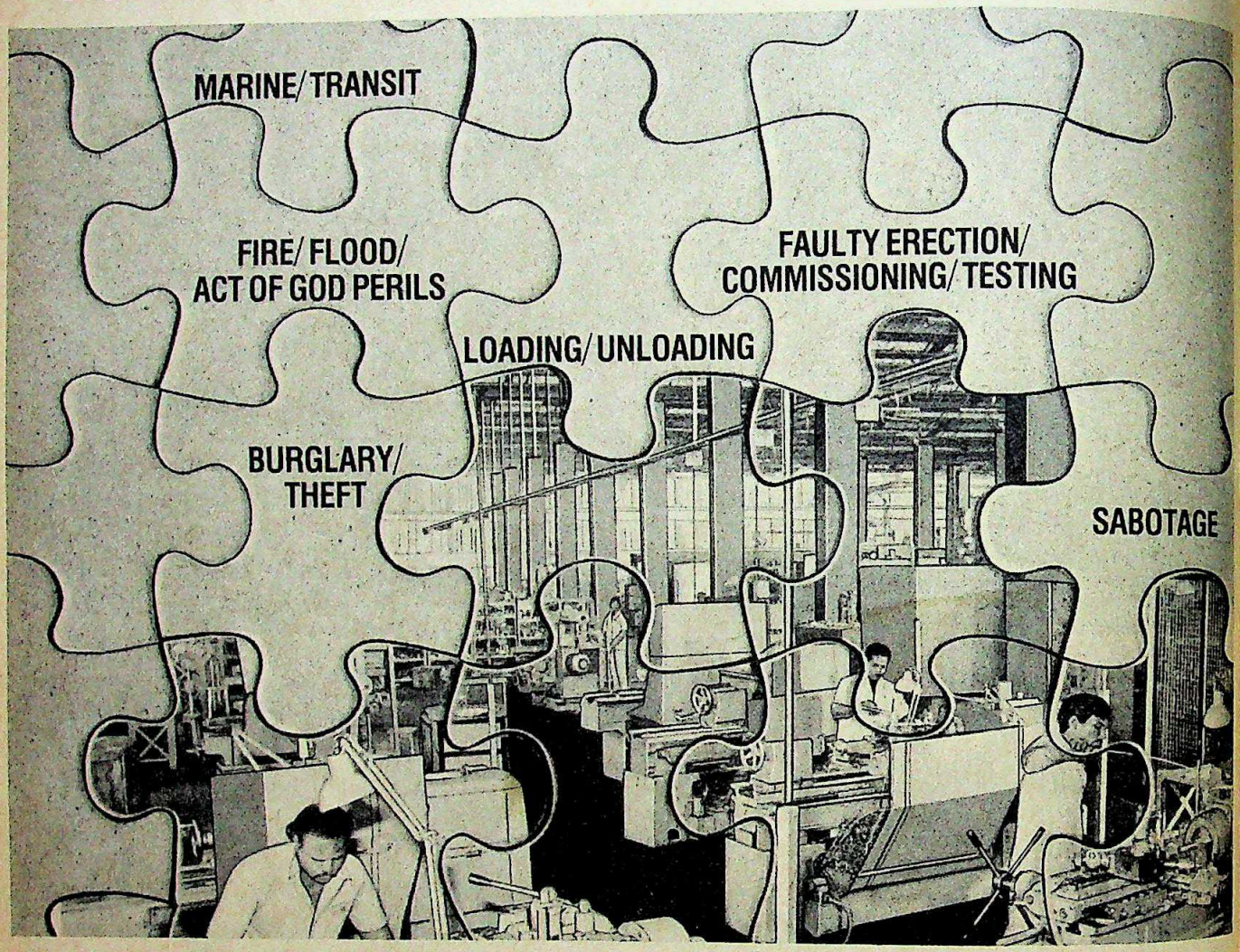

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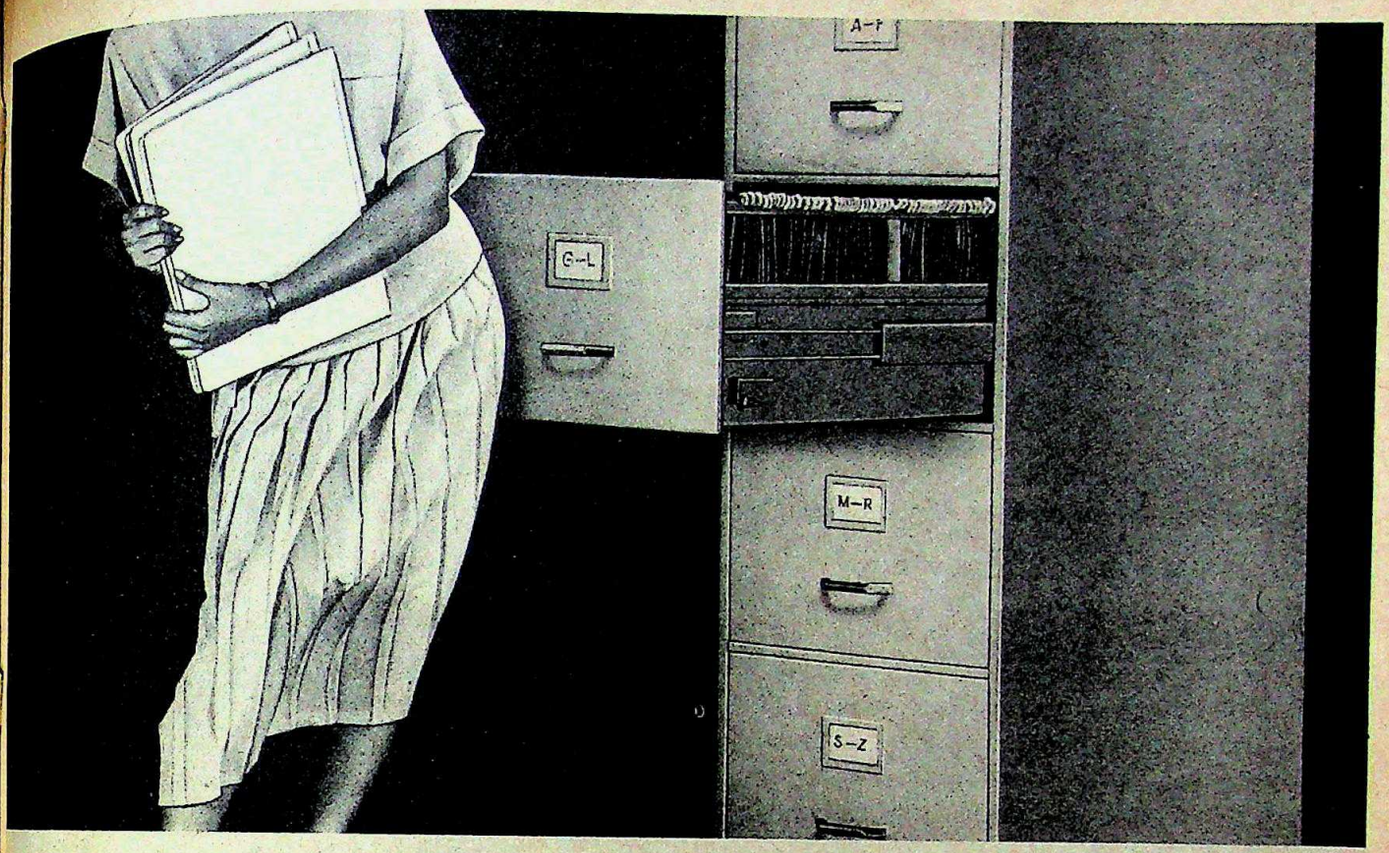

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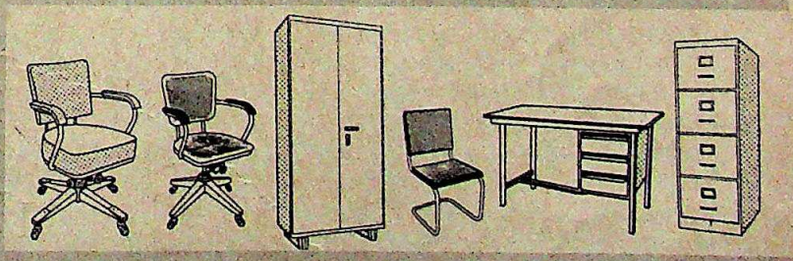

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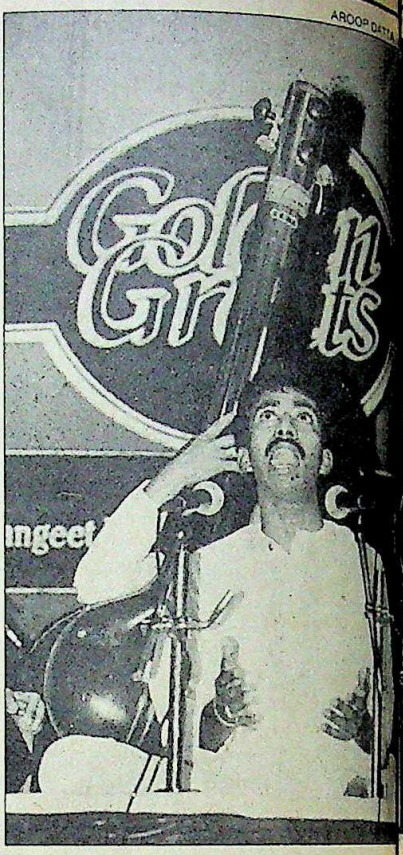
MUSIC

Return of the Voice

New crop of classical vocalists shows promise



Shubha Mudgal; and (right) Rashid Hussain Khan: emerging talent

THE hall was bursting at the seams. And a silence cast a hypnotic spell on the gathering. Then, *raag* Bageshri began to unfold gently—layer after tender layer, like a bud unravelling into bloom. And the crowd, earlier treated to an electrifying sitar concert by Budhaditya Mukherjee, sat mesmerised by the magic of meditated music by vocalist Mukul Shivputra.

For the connoisseur, it was like a journey down the *galis* of history, sparking off memories of veterans who produced great music and who've now passed into the swirling mists of the past. For the uninitiated too, the experience was moving, though unfamiliar. Whatever the sensation, one fact seemed clear from it all: vocal music was back again.

Ten years ago, connoisseurs and performers were worried that the vocal tradition was dying a slow death. But their fears have now been laid to rest. Reason: over the last few years, there has been a promising revival of the vocal tradition, as formidable talent has flowered in various parts of the country.

During the late '60s and early '70s many maestros such as Pandit Onkarnath Thakur, Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Rattanjankar, Siddheswari Devi, Begum Akhtar and Amir Khan passed away. Of course, veterans like Bhimsen Joshi and Kumar Gandharva continued to enthral, but young talent, that always complemented the reigning maestros, suddenly vanished. And apprehension grew.

At the same time, the emergence of instrumental music to the forefront was witnessed. Indian instrumental music, however, aspires for the intimacy of the voice, characterised by the *gayaki gharana* of sitarist Vilayat Khan. In fact, lessons for boys were continued on the sarangi—which is the instrument closest to the human voice—when their voices broke in adolescence. Vocalists like Bade Gulam Ali Khan and Amir Khan, who were also sarangi players, enjoyed a good rapport with the instrument.

For years, instrumental music reigned supreme. Says Keshav Kothari, secretary, Sangeet Natak Akademi: "A landmark of this phenomenon was the Ravi Shankar-Chaturlal combination which led us to the realisation that the tabla was an integral part of musical performance."

Further, instrumental music received a boost with the development of the phonographic industry, radio and television. As music became more accessible, people preferred the instrument—with its electronic accessories and amplification that provided a new thrill—to vocal music which thrived best in small *mehfils*.

However, even as instrumental music grew, a comparable quality in vocal music was missing. Explains vocalist Sheela Dhar: "The instrument excels in technical virtuosity, but it cannot capture the life-like quality of vocal music."

But the voice has survived. Among the prominent vocalists today is Mukul Shivputra, 33, who was nurtured under the tutelage of father Kumar Gandharva and mother Vasundhara Komkali in *khayal*. While trained in dhrupad under Pandit K.G. Ginde, he has also learned Carnatic music from the late M.D. Ramanathan. There is added depth to his music because of his complete involvement and profound thinking. Says critic Raghava Menon: "It's not the voice nor the technique, but the presence of that something in-between that you could only experience, which makes his music a spiritual experience."

However, the prodigy of the decade is Rashid Hussain Khan, 22, the young maestro from ITC's Sangeet Research Academy (SRA), Calcutta. At the last Sangeet Sammelan in Delhi last year, Rashid set any lingering doubts about the survival of *gharana* sangeet to rest. Having learnt from Ustad Nisar Hussain Khan, the Sahaswan *gharana* maestro, Rashid's meditated rendition of the *raag* is uncanny. Says Bhimsen Joshi: "*Yeh ladka jo chamak dikha raha hai*" (This boy has exceptional promise). "Rashid is both complete and a versatile musician," says sarod player Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

But Mukul and Rashid are not the only ones in the fray. The line-up of vocalists today is promising. Also from the SRA

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Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA

Though there has been a decline in quality, the emergence of formidable talent points to a promising revival of vocal tradition.

Mukul Shivputra; and (left) Shruti Sadolikar: new era

...apture the life...
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...urtured under...
...ar Gandharva...
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...to rest. Having...
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...Ali Khan, ...
...are not the o...
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...oy Chakraborty, Vijaya Jadav Gatle...
...r, Mashkoor Ali Khan and Arun Bha...
...i. In fact, Ajoy's emulation of Bade ...
...ham Ali Khan has been controversial. ...
...ys Ustad Amjad Ali Khan: "When I ...
...rd him on the radio, I mistook him for ...
...an *saab*, until the announcement came ...
...the end."

The galaxy of vocalists today includes ...
...ti Mukherji, Neeraj Parikh, Durga ...
...aj and Girish Wasalwar—all students ...
...Pandit Jasraj. And their range is star...
...g. For example, Ashwini Bhide and ...
...uti Sadolikar, both from the Jaipur ...
...arana, celebrate the beauty of the ...
...e—fusion of *swara* and *laya*. And while ...
...ena Sahasrabuddhe's drut khyals re...
...the Gwalior *gayaki*, her bhajans have ...
...e Kumar Gandharva touch. In ...
...hrupad, there's Faiyaz Wasif Dagar, ...
...—son of the late Faiyazuddin Dagar—...
...carry the mantle of the Dagar family's ...
...th unbroken generation of dhrupad ...
...gers. He has taken his father's place ...
...side uncle Ustad Zahiruddin Dagar in ...
...ghandi. Also known more for the depth ...
...his approach rather than for his voice is ...
...adhup Mudgal. In harmony with the ...
...e influous strains of the new vocalists is ...
...e metallic timbre of Shubha Mudgal's ...
...ice which can soar up to a magnificent ...
...escendo.

The revival of the vocal tradition was ...
...ident in the New Generation concerts ...
...ganised recently in New Delhi by the ...
...andharva Mahavidyalaya and the Trade Fair Authority of India. Participants at the concerts also included Ulhas Kashalkar, Samaresh Chaudhury and Iqbal Ahmed.

THE road to musical excellence is a long and arduous one. At least 12 to 15 years of formal training is required before giving a performance on stage. Says Sulochana Vrihaspathi of the Rampur *gharana:* "There are no shortcuts to become a musician." Adds Pandit Jasraj: "I don't take students who are not prepared to spend full time. And I don't take fees. *Vidya daan* is also necessary." As for innovation, says Ustad Zahiruddin Dagar: "What has been achieved by the veterans has to be experienced before improving on it."

However, the process of catering to millions through a medium essentially designed for *mehfils* has been at the cost of quality. Says Amjad Ali Khan: "Quality has been the victim of change. How long was the concert seems to be the subject of discussions today than how good was it." An unfortunate fall-out of the increase in the number of audience is the rise in the uninformed response to music.

This change has taken its toll on the performers too. They are in a hurry to reach the top. As a result, perfection is put on the back burner. Says Naina Devi, the diva of thumri: "Everybody wants to be a performer today." Laments Ustad Nisar Hussain Khan: *"Do saal school mein jaake tappa tappa karke subko gaana gaana hai"* (Everybody expects to be performing after just two years at music school). In fact, an eminent female vocalist dismisses the question of promise altogether, saying: "Listen to those today and us and see if they can ever reach our heights."

Unfortunately, university training in music has failed to throw up good performing musicians. Says sitarist Shujaat Khan, son of Ustad Vilayat Khan: "Going to a school of music is good to learn theory. But that is as far as it goes."

However, there are still some institutions that nurture talent in an organised manner, sustaining quality but refusing to compromise. For example, the SRA in Calcutta, and the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya which, incidentally, is celebrating its golden jubilee this year. One advantage of an institution like the SRA—even though it depends on the discretion of the owners—is that they have the resources at their disposal which they are using for a good cause. However, according to Kothari: "The best money is that which comes from the people."

Today, the kind of talent erosion experienced a few years ago seems to be a thing of the past. The young virtuosos are orchestrating a major change in the musical world. And in the allegro of time, they are the harbingers of a whole new tradition.

—RANJINI RAJAGOPAL

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THE NIZAM'S JEWELS

Treasure Hunt

Waiting to encash a legacy

FOR the heirs of the last Nizam of Hyderabad, it seems to be a cruel joke. Even 20 years after the privy purses were abolished and the scions of the erstwhile princely states began selling their heirlooms to support themselves, they are far from getting their due of the Nizam's private collection of jewels or its worth.

And the collection is dazzling. Among the invaluable pieces are 22 partially cut emeralds weighing 414.25 carats, a seven-strand necklace constituting 150 large and 220 small pearls and a 705-gram double-diamond centre piece, a 81.45-gram amulet consisting of two square emeralds and 44 diamonds, a pair of diamond and gold bracelets weighing 150 grams and studded with 270 Villandi diamonds, and a 184.75 carat uncut Jacob diamond, believed to be the third largest in the world. But for about 160 heirs of the Nizam who have waged a long legal battle to sell or secure them, they still remain out of reach.

This unresolved legal battle over the jewellery's value began after the Government abruptly stalled its auction in 1978 on the ground that national treasures could not be exported. It culminated in a compromise in April last year when the Nizam's trusts representing the heirs and the Government agreed before Supreme Court judges Ranganath Misra and M.N. Venkatachaliah to dispose of all pending petitions in various courts and work out a "package deal".

By this settlement, the Government agreed to buy or acquire some jewellery items of its choice. And the trustees agreed to sell or dispose of the rest on the understanding that the jewellery is not undervalued and due tax is paid.

In August last year, both sides named the arbiters in the dispute. While the trustees chose retired Supreme Court judge V. Khalid, the Government appointed retired Delhi High Court judge H.C. Goel with former Supreme Court judge A.N. Sen as the chief arbiter. These judges have met five times since but the arbitration proceedings haven't really begun though the deal between the two sides was to be finalised within three months of the arbiters' appointment.

Significantly, the two sides have yet to present their claims of the jewellery's value before the arbiters. The Nizam Jewellery Acquisition Committee of the Government has to list the items it wants to buy and quote the price it will pay. But it wants the trustees to put forth their value claims first. This is because the Government's committee wants to calculate the wealth tax and wants to keep the cash outflow from its treasury to the minimum by collecting the tax dues at the time of paying for the jewels.

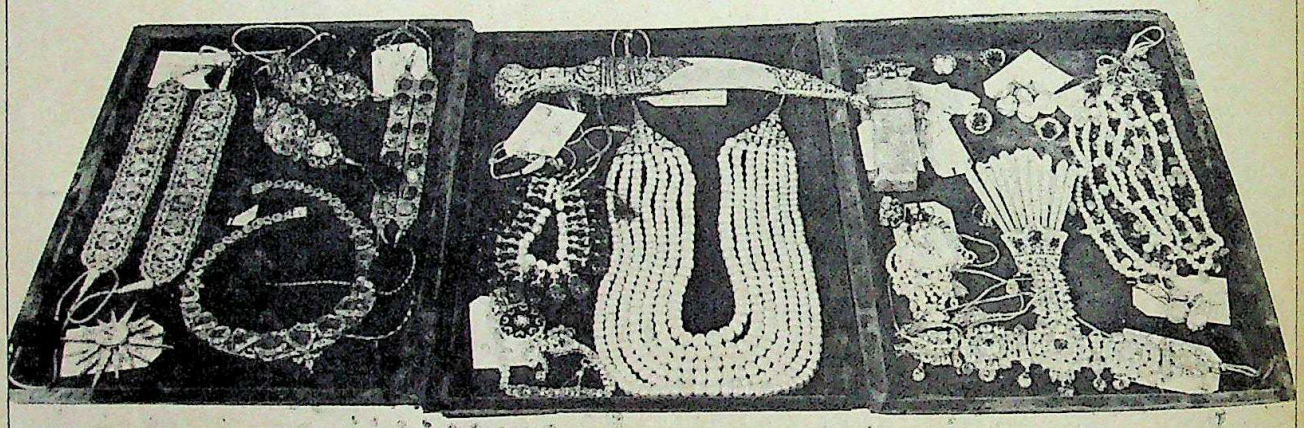
The trustees, on the other hand, want the heirs to get a fair deal. So, they've had the jewels evaluated by the world's top auctioneers Christies and Sothebys. These auctioneers examined each of the 89 items of the Nizam's principal jewellery trust and another 84 items belonging to its supplementary trust at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in Bombay late last year. But the trustees are keeping the auctioneers' estimates under wraps. They want to present them when the Government submits its price list to the arbiters.

This hard bargaining is only adding to the heirs' losses. They are keen that the Government buy up the jewels it wants and allow the trustees to sell the rest. The Sultan of Brunei and some US businessmen of Gujarati origin have contacted the heirs and trustees to buy these jewels. Predictably, some beneficiaries argue that the entire collection, estimated at over $ 100 million (Rs 170 crore), can fetch a better price if sold by professional auctioneers abroad.

Strangely, over the past two decades the Government hasn't made any effort to end the dispute even though the Nizam Trust's chairman is always its finance secretary. And only one member of the Nizam's family—Mufakkam Jah, the last Nizam Osman Ali Khan's grandson—is among the four trustees. Mufakkam also manages the charitable trusts set up by the last Nizam. Ironically, his brother Mukkaram Jah—named heir apparent by the last Nizam—who got the biggest share of the wealth, is strapped for cash like other heirs. So much so that he's been selling off properties in Hyderabad.

Other heirs of the Nizam who live on a ranch near Perth in Australia are not as lucky as Mukkaram Jah. They have not visited Hyderabad in the past five years. But for them there is a glimmer of hope: they expect some cash if the jewels are sold this year, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the city of Hyderabad. And while the quest for the elusive treasure continues, their ancestors are perhaps turning in their vaults over the delay.

—AMARNATH K. MENON



Both the Government and the trustees have yet to present their claims of the jewellery's value to the arbiters: each wants the other to do so first.

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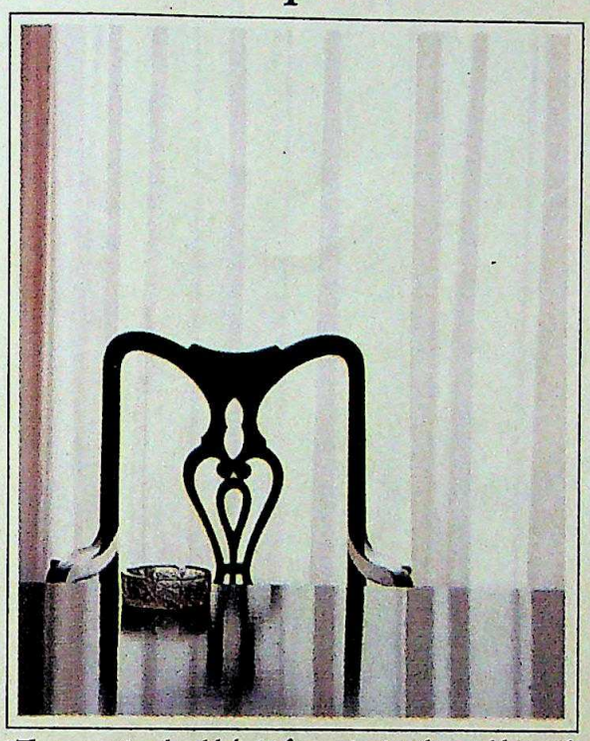
Tao.
And the Physics of Executive Space.



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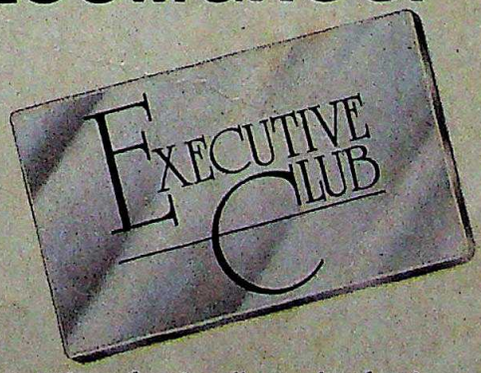

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THE MALDIVES

An Idyllic Friendship

The island nation opens up

CUP your hand and a coconut falls into it. Dip it in the sea and you have a fish. Paradise? Those sleepy little islands in the sun which make up the Maldives could well be that. Even I.K. Gujral in Male, on his maiden voyage abroad as foreign minister last fortnight, called the Maldives "the Shangrila of the East". The beaches are a moon-bathed white, the seas a primal blue, the coral reefs spectacular and people seemingly ageless and content.

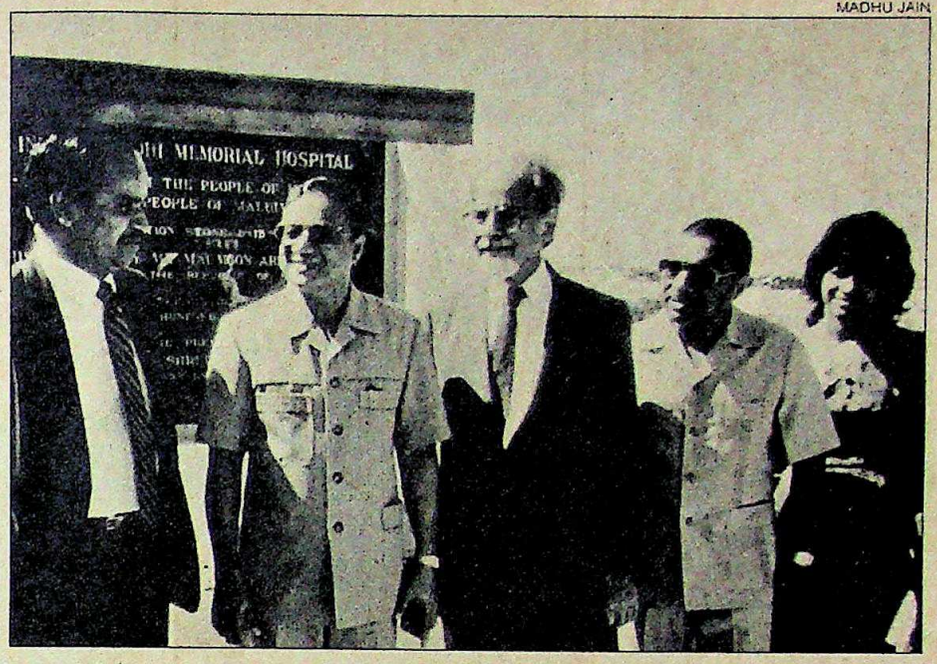
But something is stirring in this neighbourhood paradise. It all begins with the almost spoof-like coup-attempt in November 1988, when the Maldivians are startled out of an age of innocence into one of guerrillas, guns and international diplomacy. Fear gate-crashes into this carefree haven and changes things forever. They double their army to nearly 3,000. Women in snazzy dark green uniforms and young boys are brought in to swell the ranks. Experts from India and Great Britain train their nascent intelligence services. The country is also cautiously looking outwards. It is all set to host the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit this year, Sri Lanka notwithstanding. The Maldivians' main worry now is their lack of diplomats. Until now, their only full-fledged High Commission was in Colombo—where they have five diplomats.

Now, India has entered the Maldivian landscape—though discreetly. It played Galahad in 1988 and left—much to the relief of the fiercely independent Maldivians who look warily over their shoulders at Sri Lanka. Today, only too aware of its big brother image in South Asia, India is over here more like an uncle—but a benevolent and distant one who only visits when invited.

Uninvited it has already been there for the last few years. Courtesy Hindi movies. Boats blare out Hindi film music; Amitabh Bachchan cries freedom in *Main Azad Hoon*, the only film playing in Male during the Gujral visit. Their mini video film industry churns out clones of Hindi films.

The Maldives had, until that fateful November, turned its little back to India. Its existence was completely import-

MADHU JAIN



■ I.K. Gujral and Maldives President Abdul Gayoom with Indian delegation

based, depending upon Singapore and the Far East for its daily needs from milk to cokes and cars—so much so that as Foreign Minister Fathulla Jameel says: "If you go to the poorest homes they will offer you a can of Coke and not a fresh coconut." For its culture and religious sustenance (it has been an Islamic state for nine centuries) it turned to Pakistan and the Arab world. For higher education: Australia and Great Britain.

And for income, to tourism, the top earner last year, with a ratio of as many as 1,60,000 tourists to a native population of just 2,00,000. So, with an average annual income of about $380 (Rs 6,460) the Maldivian is better off than the Indian.

How far India was from the Maldivian world-view is apparent from the fact that despite its being almost their closest neighbour (45 minutes by air from Trivandrum), the Maldivians fly to Bombay or Delhi via Singapore. The joint commission which met last fortnight after a lapse of four years will change all that: visa restrictions will be waived and the Male-Trivandrum flight extended to Bombay and eventually Delhi.

Post-November, India was put on the front burner for the Maldivians. "We are not afraid of Sri Lanka now. We have India in one hand and the United States in the other," says Ibrahim Rashid, a taxi driver from the atoll of Addo. Nor do the rulers fear help from India. "India knew how to say *salaam*," says a senior official. Deputy Defence Minister Ilyas Ibrahim—the brother-in-law of President Abdul Gayoom and said to be the second most powerful man in Male—told INDIA TODAY that there are 14 Maldivian Army officers currently training in India. In the pipeline are scholarships—and Marutis with a local trader bringing in about 10 on an experimental basis.

But India has to tread softly. Probe Maldivians a bit and the old fears of being dominated by India surface. Though the domination of Indian businessmen—especially Bohras—ended in 1961 when some of them were thrown out, today Indians are back. This is a shoppers' paradise—saris and electronic goods—for Indians who come from Kerala and Tamil Nadu. And many guest houses run by Indians have also sprouted here.

For India, too, those little dots on the map have become importantly alive: their strategic location isn't lost. When the British Royal Air Force withdrew from its Gan base in Addo in 1977, the Soviets bid for the island immediately. So did the Australians later. And the rest of the world also threw covetous glances.

But the Maldivians—desperate to preserve their way of life—kept everybody at a safe, friendly distance. As Foreign Minister Jameel says: "Professor Higgins asks, 'why can't a woman be more like a man.' We ask, 'why can't the world be more like us?'" Good question. The crime rate in the Maldives is unbelievably low: there have been only three murders in the last three decades. There are no prisons either. The only punishment: being sent to an uninhabited isle. A German was asked after he murdered somebody whether he wanted to return to Germany. He refused. He was sent to an uninhabited isle. After serving his sentence he returned to his isle and married a local Maldivian.

—MADHU JAIN in the Maldives

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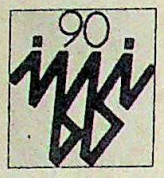
FILM FESTIVAL

A Bold New Breed

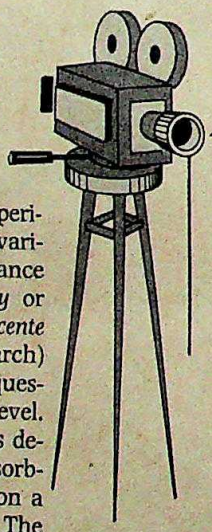
Serious Indian cinema is back with a bang



OBITUARIES on the death of serious cinema in India piled up towards the end of the last decade. And even its thespian patron, Nasiruddin Shah, turned his back on it last year. The attack was multifold. Video piracy was like a cancer within. And television was the killer rival, armed with glamour, money and audience.

But now something seems to be stirring to life again. It is a time for new beginnings and new directions. If anything, the films screened in the Indian Panorama at the International Film Festival '90 in Calcutta last fortnight highlighted fresh talent—in fact a new generation of film makers. Their films were confident, technically excellent. And unabashedly and aggresively Indian. For once, it seemed a breed of film makers had evolved to create a New Indian Cinema.

The sturdy stalwarts—Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Adoor Gopalakrishnan—were there like banyan trees under whose giant shadows, saplings struggle to grow. But, this time there were also bright shoots making an impressive debut.



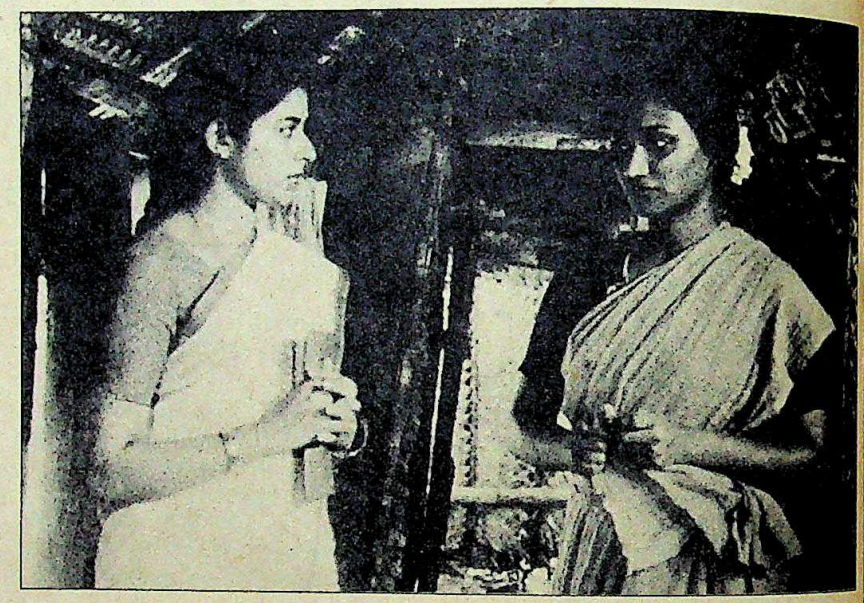
The new entrants experimented with a complex variety of themes. For instance Pervez Merwanji's *Percy* or T.V. Chandran's *Alicente Anweshanam* (Alice's Search) dealt with psycho-social questions at the individual level. *Percy*, young Merwanji's debut-making film, is an absorbing Gujarati film based on a Cyrus Mistry short story. The film explores the mind and feelings of its main character, the 28-year-old Percy, played by Kurush Deboo, and his domineering mother Banubai, played by Ruby Patel. Percy, whose father died early is completely trammelled by his mother. But through music, Percy discovers the joy and richness of life.

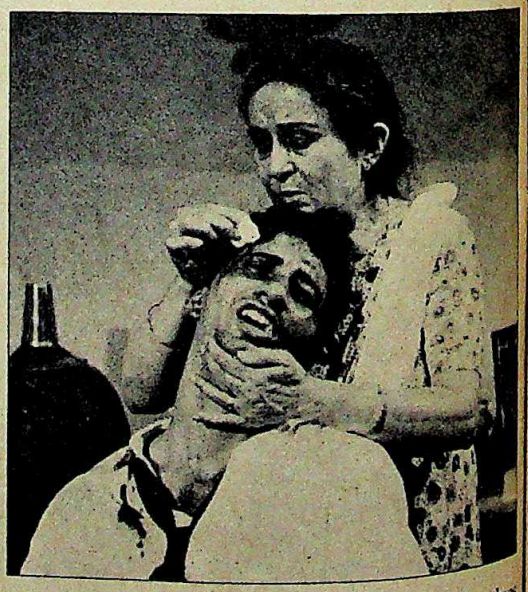
Cinematically, the film is beautiful because the director interweaves the past with present instead of using flashbacks. And the camera effectively moves back and forth with Percy's thought. But the film fails to answer the question whether Percy really comes out of the influence of his mother. Often, there are shades of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, but Merwanji insists it isn't. Although he admits that the film is based on the Jungian concept of 'dream body' as the youth sees his present and past in the same frame.

The youthful Chandran's *Alicente Anweshanam* is a well-scripted, sensitively handled film on a woman's struggle to find her own identity. At a superficial level, the woman is searching for her missing husband, but subconsciously, she searches for her own person. And with this realisation, she is a transformed person. Explains Chandran: "I wanted to convey that a woman doesn't need a shoulder to cry on if she knows how to manage her life on her own."

Besides thematic complexity, there was thematic freshness. Among those to make a mark was *Suryodaya* (Sunrise), a Marathi film by Gaganvihari Borate, 24, probably one of the youngest directors at the festival. The film focuses on the plight of a nomadic tribe. The tribals await a new home after they themselves burn down their huts—on the advice of some social workers. Eventually, after many political dramas, they realise that they must build their own homes instead of wandering like their forefathers.

Yet another discovery was Surinder Singh with his Punjabi film *Marhi Da Deeva* (Light of the Tomb). Based on Guru Dayal Singh's novel, the film is a telling commentary on the socio-economic





Stills from *Alicente Anweshanam*; (right) *Percy*: complex themes

The new entrants experimented with a complex variety of themes. It was a time for new directions.

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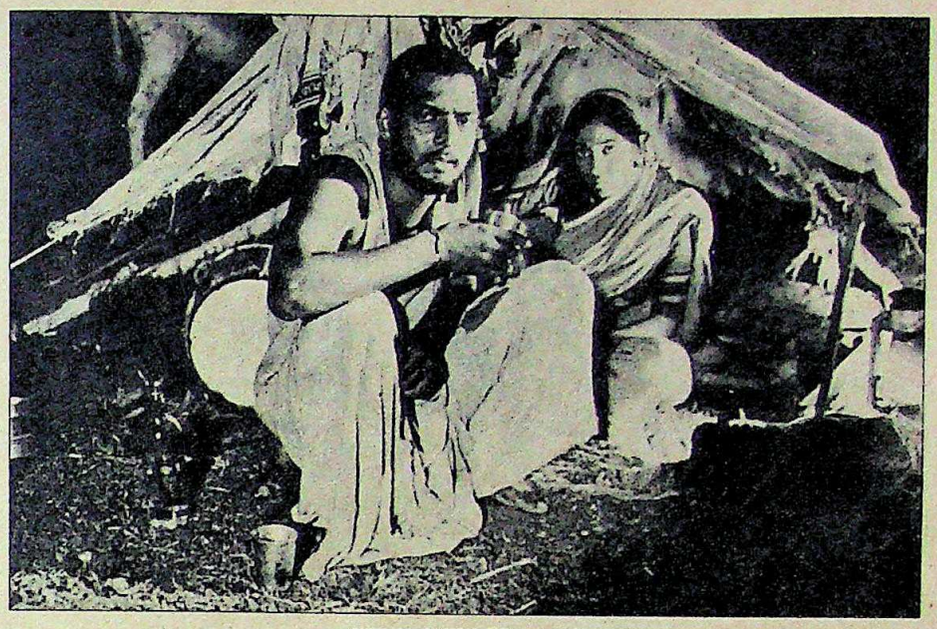
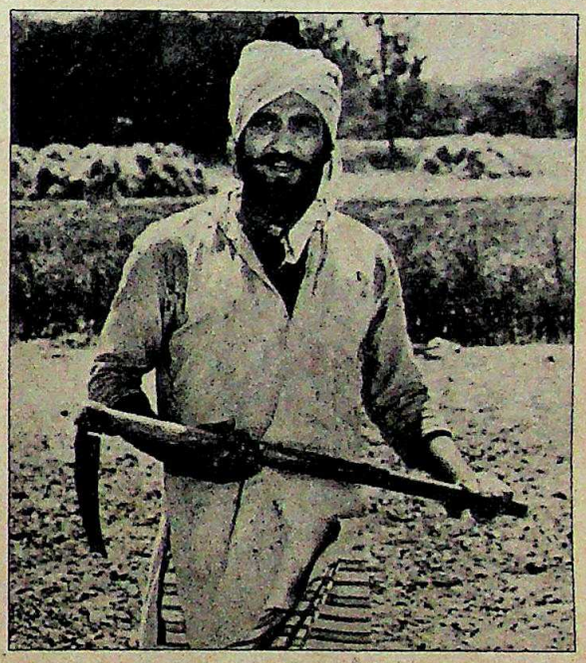
conditions in rural Punjab—a region that has received hardly any attention from serious film makers. *Marhi Da Deeva*, which had to be shot almost entirely on the outskirts of Faridabad because of the situation in Punjab, depicts the social tragedy wrought by the transition from feudalism to capitalism. When Guru Dayal Singh's novel was published in Punjab in the '60s, it was considered to be a love story. However, says Surinder Singh: "I visualised it as a comment on the prevailing socio-economic conditions, class barriers and economic prejudices that separate man from man." In the feudal system, the landlord treated the sharecropper as a brother. As money came in, the sharecropper became a machine-like receiver of wages.





Stills from *Suryodaya*; and (right) *Marhi Da Deeva*: unusual subjects

IT was precisely this kind of regional diversity that added a special flavour to the revival of serious cinema in the country. West Bengal and Kerala seemed to be the most active in this regard—the two regions virtually dominated the panorama at the festival. Last year's national award winning Indian film, *Piravi*, by Shaji N. Karun—considered by some to be the first Indian masterpiece after *Pather Panchali* by Satyajit Ray—was screened again for the audiences.

There were, however, others which demanded and got notice. For instance, there was Hariharan's *Oru Vadakkan Veeragadha* (One Folktale from the North). A story of love and death told in medieval Kerala, the film explodes in a splash of colour and martial arts. Interestingly, the narrative reverses convention—and tells the story from the perspective of the villain.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Mathilukal* (The Walls) was a sensitive film based on a novelette of the same name by celebrated Malayalam writer and freedom fighter Vaikkom Muhammad Basheer. The film is set against the background of the freedom movement. Basheer is jailed and while others are freed in due course, he is not. Feeling frustrated, desperate and lonely, he wanders across the vacant ward and even hatches a plot to break the walls. Then he hears the voice of a woman from across the wall between the male and female wards. He feels the spark of life and a relationship between him and the voice develops. They decide to meet in hospital but on the morning of the proposed meeting, Basheer is released. The meaning of his freedom is changed.

Hosts West Bengal provided a rich menu. Led by Utpalendu Chakraborty's *Chhandaneer* (The Nest of Rhythm), the new generation's success stood out since their films fought for attention with Satyajit Ray's *Ganashatru* (People's Enemy) and Mrinal Sen's *Ek Din Achanak*. Setting aside his socio-political commitments, Chakraborty decided to go experimental. The film shows how Indian culture is being destroyed by the intrusion of popular culture.

The freshness and regional diversity lent a special flavour to the revival of good cinema.

For the first time, he attempts to blend Bharatnatyam and Rabindrasangeet. "A blend of the south and the north," says Chakraborty. Buddhadev Dasgupta's Hindi film *Bag Bhaadur* on the death of folk art is virtually a sequel to *Phera* (The Return) which was about the artiste's conflict between commitment and compromise in his quest for a place in society. "The film," says Dasgupta, "is placed in the '60s which was the time when art forms and folk art started dying all over the world." Even Aparna Sen's film, *Sati*, on the marriage of a mute girl to a tree, was remarkable for its unusual theme. Says Sen: "Such ritual marriages were common. Even now they are prevalent in some parts of India and Nepal."

It was appropriate that the festival ended with Ray's *Ganashatru*, based on Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*. It was a homage to a director who took the first, deliberate steps in laying the tracks of serious Indian cinema. It seemed that yet another generation of serious Indian film makers was paying their dues to the master, even as they were announcing their definite arrival.

And that arrival was important. It impressed with its technical self-assurance and its cinematic brilliance. For once, it was clear that the film festival had succeeded in bringing to the surface a fresh, confident Indian cinema.

—FARZAND AHMED

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SHARAD SAXENA

Coach Ganesh (third from left) and others watch Pargat Singh try out penalties

HOCKEY

Striking Back

A rejuvenated team is set for the World Cup

FOR nearly four years now, it seemed that Indian hockey would never recover from the sudden death it suffered at the 1986 World Cup at Willesden, London, by finishing last among 12 nations. In successive international tournaments after that up to the Berlin Champions Cup last year, the team showed an inability to adapt to the changing fast and tough patterns of the game.

But the Asia Cup championship held last December in Delhi's Shivaji Stadium was like oxygen to the gasping team. Not only did the team show signs of a phoenix-like return, but on its triumphant march to the finals—where it lost to traditional rivals Pakistan—crushed Asian Games Champion South Korea 5-0. Now India is set to joust its way back to a pre-eminent position in world hockey at the seventh World Cup to be held at Lahore from February 12 to 23.

The ignominious decline of Indian hockey, which started at the London World Cup, jolted the Sports Authority of India and the Indian Hockey Federation to think up a much overdue master plan to improve the game's quality. The first step was to entrust the team to former Indian captain-turned-coach M.P. Ganesh in March 1988. The plan's modest aim: gold medal at the Beijing Asian Games this year.

Ganesh not only boosted the team's morale but made it change its strategy. After initial drawbacks the team showed signs of a comeback finishing third in the New Jersey Intercontinental meet last year to qualify for the World Cup. He tried to galvanise the team into alert hockey with his emphasis on "positional play".

Though this concept of sticking to a position on the faster synthetic surfaces is disputed by some former players and analysts of the game, Ganesh has relied on it to improve the players' ability to trap the ball neatly instead of fumbling. "They can match any other side in speed and stamina though not in strength," says Ganesh.

He also put the players through long spells of training on the synthetic surface. "This is to familiarise them with these surfaces so that there is no strain on their legs during competitions. We have a distinct disadvantage in size when compared to the heavily built Australian and European players," he explains.

Analyses of the performance of individual players have shown that the team put together for the World Cup can score a fluent win in a robust hard-hitting game. "They are capable of winning pitched one-to-one battles but do not have a campaign plan to win a long war like the World Cup contest," observed former Olympian-turned-doctor and national selector Dr Vece Paes.

Two of the best recent finds of Indian hockey are the goalkeepers Ashish Ballal and Mark Patterson. All is not well, however, with the defence made up of the two full-backs and three men on the half-line. The lynchpin of the defence—the experienced deep defender Pargat Singh—tends to get overconfident with risky clearances and adventurous dribbles. The half-line has been dependent on the aging B.K. Subramani. "This is the dark area where new players like Ajit Lakra and Jagdev Singh are still to find their feet," admits Paes.

But the former Indian captain Leslie Claudius suggests an overhaul of strategy: "If we have to consolidate the defence we must learn to play all-in-all hockey by breaking away from positions like in football. This is where the European teams have the edge."

Doubts about the defence are overshadowed by the confidence about the

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strike power of the frontline. The Asia Cup matches and the four-week training sessions from January 8 at Shivaji Stadium reveal that Jagbir Singh, Jude Felix, Thoiba Singh and newcomer Edgar Mascarenhas form a strong strike force. Tapping the ball and hitting it hard, the forwards come out with fluent patterns to baffle the rival defence.

Ironically, the last match India played in the Asia Cup final revealed its biggest weakness. More important than the 0-2 loss to Pakistan was the litany of muffed scoring opportunities—seven penalty corners and even a penalty stroke against a team which has a somewhat similar approach and style of play. "Modern hockey is scoring a goal with every opportunity and a matter of strategy. We have a long way to go," lamented Claudius.

It was not just stick and stamina work at the training camp. Ganesh and the three other coaches assisting him—the fourth coach Cedric D'Souza of Bombay left in a huff protesting against Ganesh's ways—played videotapes of great matches and pointed out the penalty corners techniques with the help of charts. Emphasised Paes: "There is a thumb rule. The greater the conversion of penalty corners the higher is the final ranking of the team."

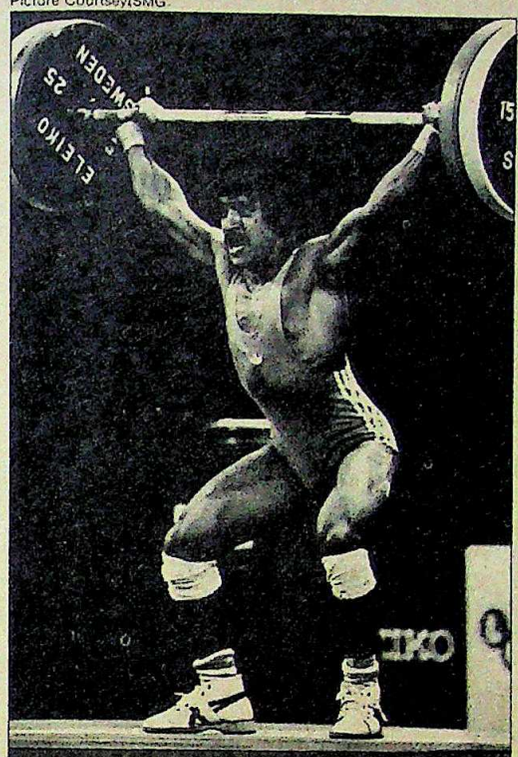
Though it is one of the vital inputs in training, the Indian team's rate of penalty corner conversion is poor. Argues former captain M.M. Somayya: "For this, training alone is not enough. The big match experience counts and the young side can improve only by trying out variations during tense matches." Even before the Asia Cup championship the players familiarised themselves with 12 variations of penalty corner conversions and they are still to perfect it. Agreed Ganesh: "Ours is not a flawless team, but we have advanced in the rebuilding phase."

In a tournament like the World Cup, even the early matches cannot be treated as lung-openers. India's first match in the league round is against the Soviet Union, then second against Argentina then France and then the formidable Netherlands. In the other half, Pakistan which finished seventh just above India at the 1986 World Cup at Willesden play against England, West Germany, Canada, Spain and Ireland to decide on the top two teams from this group to make the semi-finals grade.

India, no doubt, faces an uphill task. As V. Bhaskaran who captained the gold medal-winning team at the 1980 Moscow Olympics remarked: "We are making a new beginning to get back to the top." But the turf to the top is fast and slippery and dominated by new muscular craftsmen of the game.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

Picture Courtesy/SMG



P. RANGASWAMY

R. CHANDRASEKHARAN

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Snatching Golds

Indian weight-lifters bag 27 medals

As a boy Raghavan Chandrasekharan had often dreamt of being a strong man. "One of the ways to be so, I thought, was to lift heavy weights," he says. At the local club, he recalls, there was one bar to which were attached some crude iron plates. Nevertheless, Chandrasekharan persisted. The dividends turned out to be rich. When just 16 years, he managed to find a place in the Indian team at the South Asian Games in Dhaka in 1987 where he won a gold for weight-lifting. That gold was just the first step in an amazing career.

Three years later, the spotlights have focused again on the young Tamil Nadu boy as he snatched three gold medals in the 52-kg category on the first day of the 13th Commonwealth Games at Auckland.

Chandrasekharan wasn't the only one to strike gold. Soon, his team-mates—among them Rangaswamy Punnuswamy, 24, and Paramjit Sharma, 32, who won three golds each, and Parvesh Chandra Sharma, 32, who won two golds—joined him to bask under the burst of glory and confetti at Aotea Centre in Auckland.

The golds were not the only successes the Indian weight-lifters had. The 10-member team won 27 medals in all, with each of them getting at least one. Govindraj Velu claimed two silvers and a bronze in the 52-kg section. M. Gopal harnessed a silver and a bronze in the 56-kg section. S. Kumaresan took three bronzes in the 67.5-kg category. Karandhar Mondal took three silvers in the 75 kg section, and the heaviest Indian lifter Sornamuthu Karuppuswamy, 22, took one silver in the clean and jerk in the 82.5 kg division. Subrata Kumar Paul too won two silvers and a bronze in the 67.5-kg category. But a couple of days later, he tested positive to drugs, casting a pall of gloom over the Indian triumph.

Nevertheless, the overall mood in the Indian camp was a joyous one. Said coach Pal Singh Sandhu: "If these boys can achieve so much in so little time, they can achieve a lot in the longer run. They have the advantage of light body weight and body structure which gives them a low centre of gravity."

Indeed the victory comes as a terrific morale booster for the Indian lifters. At the Brisbane Commonwealth Games in 1982—India had boycotted the Edinburgh Games in protest against UK's refusal to impose economic sanctions against South Africa—India had won just three silver medals in weight-lifting. But

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Since then, the rules have been changed and now there are separate medals for the three events in each weight category. So the number of weight-lifting medals in the contest has gone up threefold.

Still, for India to be lifted to the top of the medals tally, at least during the initial stages of an international meet, was an event in itself. The tabloids screamed the arrival of the young lifters who became heroes. Said Ranganswamy, who started lifting weights when he was 18: "In Coimbatore, from where I come, weight-lifting is a popular sport." But others like Paramjit Sharma and Parvesh Chandra Sharma took to the sport only in their 20s.

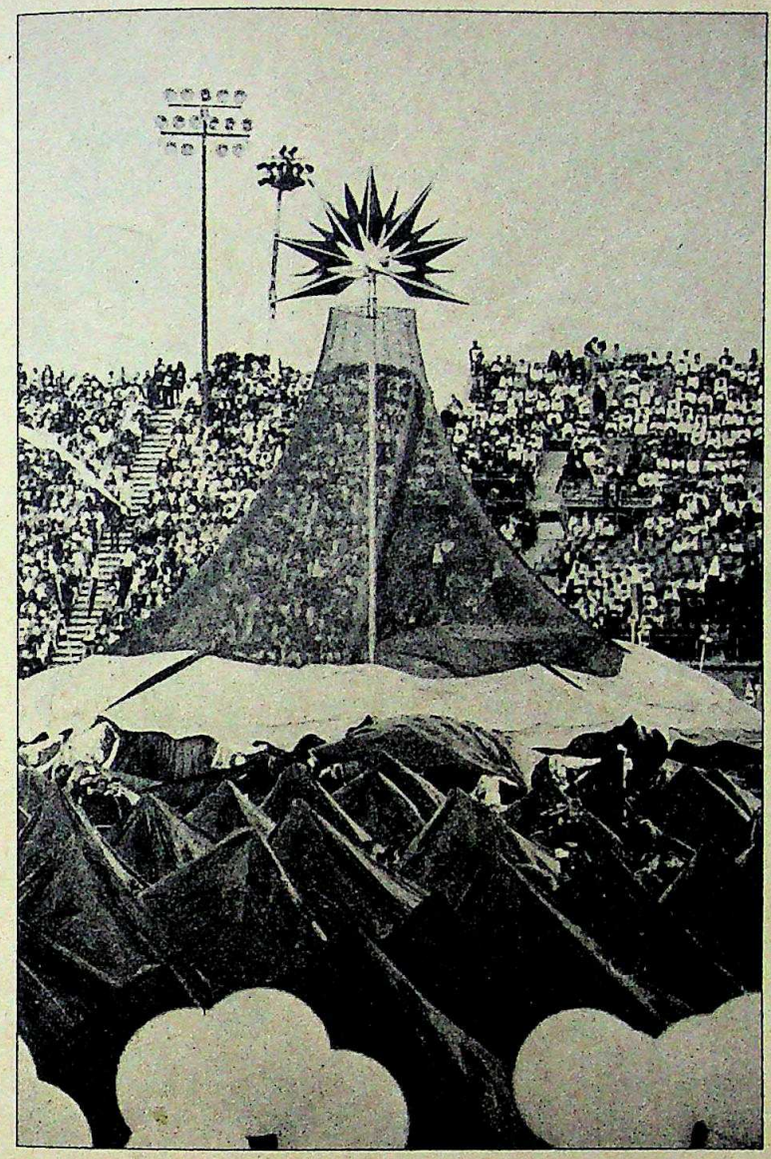
If the weight-lifters covered themselves with glory and gold, the badminton team had just their sweat to show. In the team events, India, without a dependable doubles combination, lost to Australia 2-3, was drubbed 0-5 by holders England and humbled by New Zealand 1-4. By then, the team had lost hope and fielded their second string of Sushant Bora and Deepti Thanekar for the singles. The result: Scotland pushed India to the bottom of the table with a 3-2-victory.

Said coach T.P.S. Puri: "The doubles combination let us down." But both the leading singles players Vimal Kumar and Madhumitha Bisht won most of their matches, holding out hopes for the individual events.

The weightlifting blitz eclipsed performances in sports like rifle-shooting where India bagged a few medals though its shooters had held out hopes of far better performances. Apart from the Indian weight-lifters, English swimmer Adrian Moorhouse and Australian Hayley Lewis lapped up much adulation during the early part of the Games. The 25-year-old Moorhouse won his third consecutive Commonwealth Games gold in the 100 metres breast-stroke equalling his world record in the event at 1 minute 01.49 seconds, just before rushing off to present his children's programme *The Cat's Whiskers* on BBC, Moorhouse said: "I have to get back and keep trying to break that world record."

Moorhouse, however, could not prevent Australia from making a big splash in the West Auckland pool. Australia won four of the six golds on the opening day and five more on the second day. The 15-year-old Brisbane schoolgirl Hayley Lewis won four swimming golds in her first four events to emerge the golden mermaid of the meet.

In many ways, the Auckland Games had an auspicious beginning. After the boycott of the previous Edinburgh Games by most Third World countries, the very fact that all member-countries were participating came as a big relief. A repeat of the Edinburgh boycott would have sounded the death-knell of the Commonwealth Games. As Chris Knowles, a general manager of the organisation committee, says: "I am glad there was no boycott this time. The financial side of these games, which attracted even Japanese sponsors, will have a secure future."



The opening ceremony: full participation

The participation of all countries has caused much elation among the elders of the Commonwealth movement which during the last few years seemed to be on its last lap. The breeze of new life wafted across the 35,670-seater Mount Smart Stadium as a heart-tugging multicultural 160-minute opening ceremony, conceived by Logan Brewer unfolded. A baton which was carried through 14,000 km was brought into the stadium by well-known New Zealander Mark Todd, sitting on the 17-year-old horse Charisma on which he had won two show-jumping Olympic medals. Todd then passed the baton to the famous Kiwi runner Peter Snell—winner of the 800 m gold at the Rome Olympics and the 800 m and 1500 m gold at the Tokyo Olympics—who handed it over to Prince Edward.

Then followed a five-part enactment of New Zealand's history by the Maoris—the original tribal inhabitants of New Zealand. The presence of the revered Maori leader, Dame Whina Cooper, 93, underlined the fact that New Zealand's tribals had accepted the white settlers whom they call 'Pakeha'. Said Dai Bindoff, a senior organiser: "It is important for us to know that the Maoris and the Pakehas are one in New Zealand." Commented ace middle distance runner Sebastian Coe, who is here for one last lunge for a medal before switching to politics: "It was terrific to see a New Zealand flavour rather than an international one like other countries have had."

For India, the Games have brought new hopes. The country put on its best ever show in an international meet, if the seven-country SAF Games are not taken into account. This should be inspiration enough for the sports administrators in the country to adopt more professional methods and attitudes. Only then will the eternal gloom that hovers over Indian stadia, lift.

—V. KRISHNASWAMY in Auckland

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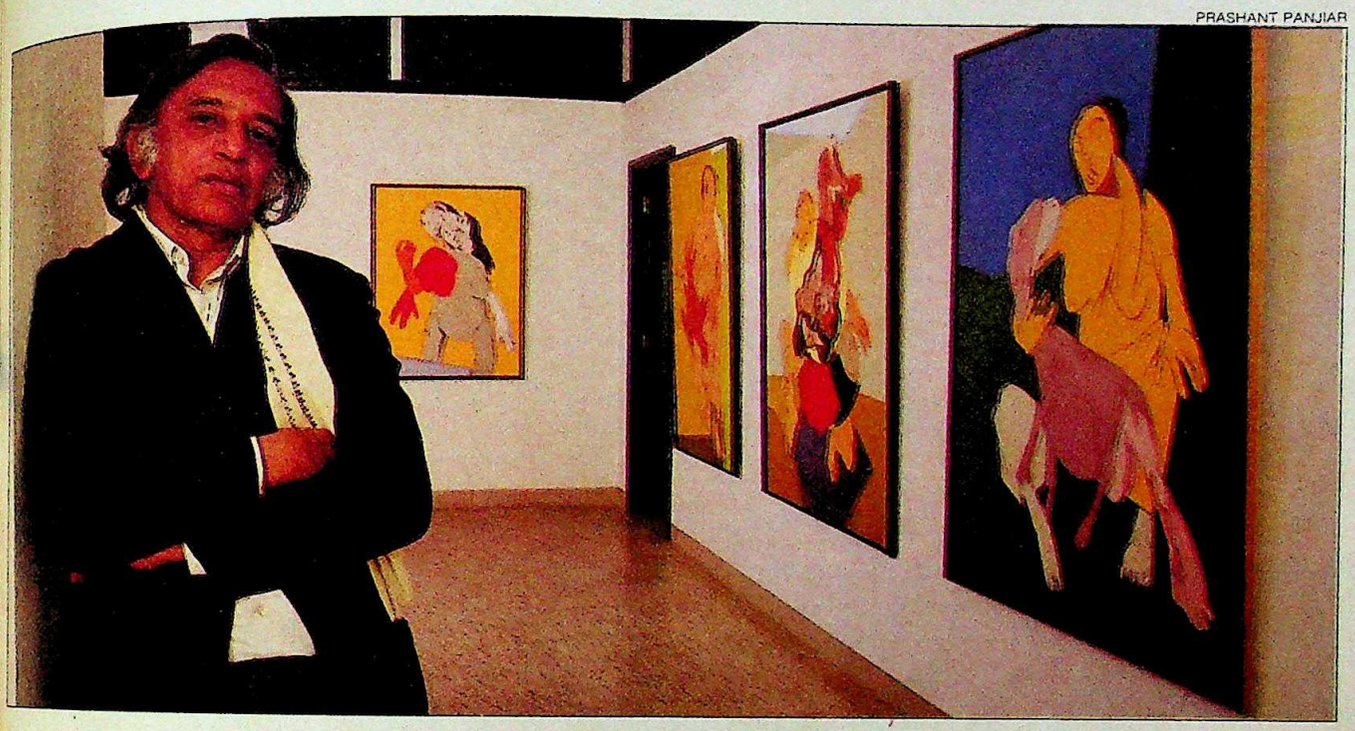
TYEB MEHTA

Finding a New Image

The painter discovers fresh inspiration in Kali

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Tyeb Mehta with some of his works at the exhibition

LIKE the Ancient Mariner's albatross, the haunting images followed Tyeb Mehta the length of his painterly journey. The trussed bull, the falling figure, the rickshawpuller, and all those distorted, silently screaming mouths and fragmented beings populated the violent world of alienation and *angst* the 65-year-old painter wanted to portray.

And for long years—he's been painting fulltime since 1947, after a stint at the J.J. School of Arts—the images kept repeating themselves. Even the 16-minute award winning film, *Koodal*, that he made in 1971 had bulls at its kernel.

But now a new and potent image, the goddess Kali, has entered his tortured world with the force of a whirlwind, making his exhibition at Delhi's Art Heritage (the last in Delhi was 12 years ago) a turning point for him—and setting off murmurs of appreciation. "He's come through finally," says art critic Keshav Malik. "These are lasting works, unlike much of the work now inundating the galleries."

Kali might appear to have made a sudden, dramatic entry into Bombay-based Mehta's world. But she was only waiting in the wings: the goddess is the culmination of all he's done until now. Another vehicle to chronicle the national condition. Or of mankind itself. "These images go beyond mere social documentation," explains theatre personality E. Alkazi, now busy putting contemporary Indian art on the world stage. "Looking at these works you find yourself in a sort of echo-chamber of the history of human suffering."

The images echo and amplify the painter's first tryst with violence, an experience indelibly imprinted on his memory. Mehta with sad, drooping eyes hesitates to talk about his feelings. It was Partition. And on the Mohammadali Road in Bombay, where he lived with his conservative Bohra Muslim family, he saw "a man being slaughtered, his face being smashed with stones." Explains he: "I can never forget that image. Perhaps it was the conditions that I lived in, the life of closed community chawls."

Consequently, his earlier work was more expressionist: agitated surfaces structured by brush strokes. His sojourn in New York changed that, and he turned to what painter Gieve Patel describes as a "cooler language...a painterly yoga, employed to contain terror."

The terror today is no less. But he works by suggestion. "I walked to Meerut during the riots. But I didn't paint Meerut. That is the difference between being a painter and being a human being and part of society," he says.

Today his surfaces are flat and shadowless, like glass paintings. "The light comes from within. These are calm surfaces, but the drama is transferred to the image by the colour proportions," says painter Krishen Khanna.

The image then becomes all. And with Kali, his search for the "primordial mother goddess" has finally ended. His Kali, painted in an extraordinary, magnetic Prussian blue is without her necklace of skulls. Nor does she hold a severed head in any of her many hands. Yet, she is no less the cosmic, fear-inspiring destroyer. But what makes his Kali so meaningful and powerful an image is that she appears simultaneously maternal and caring: the ample stomach, the lovely, calm blue—"the blue of Mary, of the heavens" as Khanna describes it.

She is also the image of our times. "By transcending his deepest fears and successfully containing them in an icon that is ancient and also entirely modern, Tyeb Mehta has given our contemporary moment a great gift," claims Patel.

Kali is really the natural follow-up of his tied-up bull. Says Khanna: "This is not the trussed bull of Picasso, nor the miniature or the European bull, but the bull of sacrifice, an image of giving."

And perhaps the image of arriving.

—MADHU JAIN

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RAJNEESH

Man who Dared be God

Seer of sexuality, master of the moment, Osho was a unique and inimitable thinker

AT the very end, the Bhagwan from obscure Kuchwada said: "I leave you my dream." And next morning, lamented with frenzied rejoicing as he had desired, his body was hurriedly cremated. But what Rajneesh-Zorba-Osho's dream was, no one could tell. Was it moksha through meditation, or was it nirvana through sex? Was it freedom through indulgence, or was it the freedom to indulge? Was it the beauty of the Rolls Royce, or was it the truth of the word? Or was it simply Rajneesh's way of inflicting one last joke on a flock he had held in complete thrall, till the very end, to his ever-changing avatars and ways?

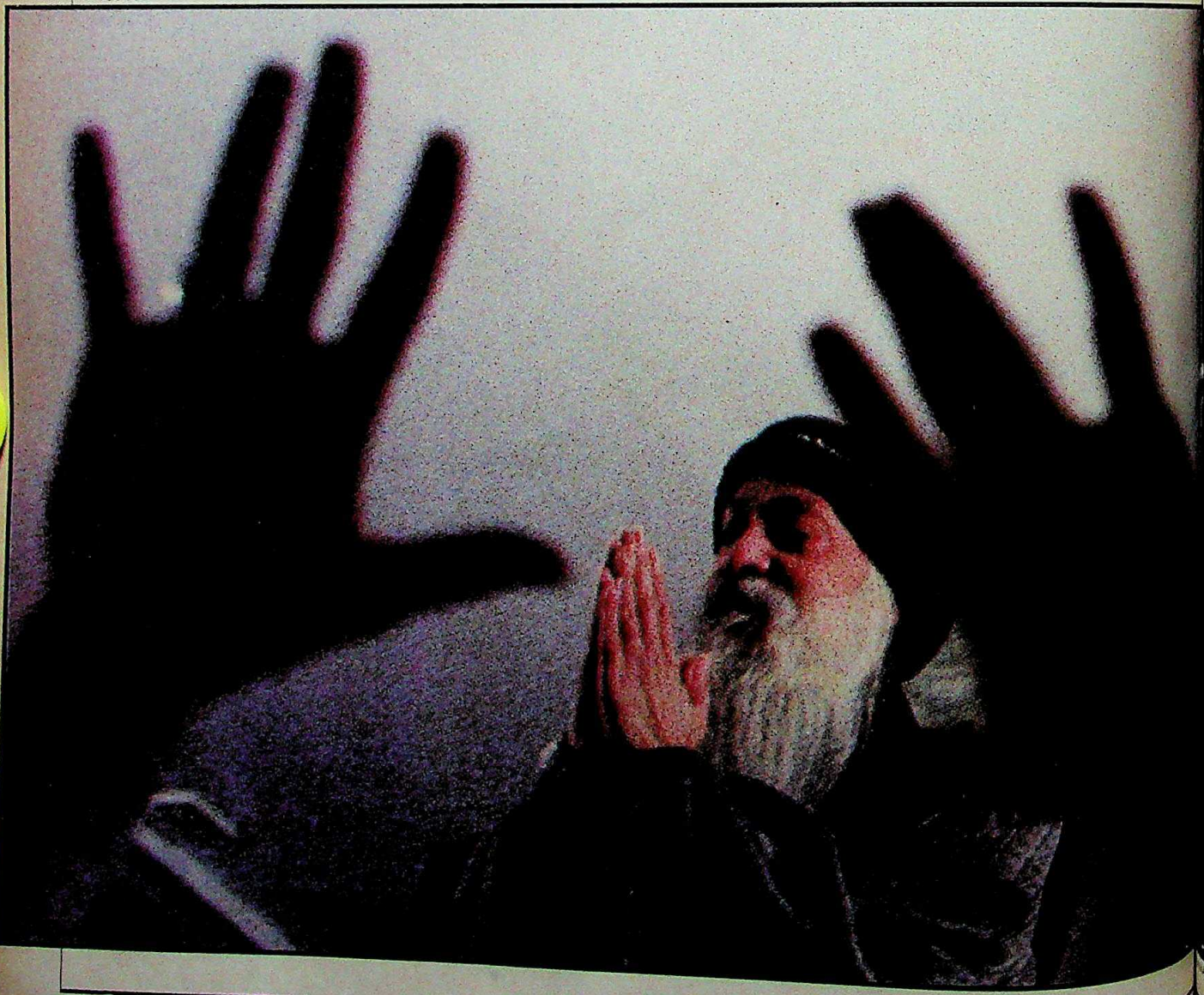
No matter what it was, it was a dream thousands bought—consecrating both body and bullion on its altar—while he was alive. And when he was dead it was no different. Thousands of maroon-robed sanyasins danced on the streets of Pune in feverish celebration as their Bhagwan had decreed. But behind the revelry serious questions lurked about the nature of his illness, the haste with which he was cremated, and the future of the commune. Sanyasins insisted he died of the effects of the thallium poisoning that he suffered in jail in the US. In the absence of an autopsy, the claim remained hard to sustain.

It may have been a prosaic, earthly demise for one claiming divinity, but his life had been brim-full with much. And though many a sanyasin may have escaped to give the lie to his promised enlightenment, there were many more who saw light in those penetrating eyes, who heard the susurrations of utopia in those hypnotic syllables.

For those two qualities of a seer

■ (Clockwise from below) Rajneesh; his funeral procession; and Osho's followers celebrate his death on the streets of Pune

YOG JOY



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D. SANJAY

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Rajneesh possessed in ample measure: his mesmeric eyes made you forget the abrasion of his Hindi hicktown accent, and the volumes of words he intoned smoothly drowned out doubt. What the sneering, envious masses tended to forget, amid all the controversy over intercourse and orgasm that his communes generated, was that Rajneesh was by all standards a learned man. He'd plunged deep into every religion and into the fountainheads of human thought, chewing at length both the western philosophers from Plato to Marx, and the Oriental schools from Zen to Tao to the Hindu. A voracious reader, he could speed-read up to 2,000 pages a day, and possessed a photographic memory, quote chapter and verse from what he'd imbibed.

But it was not merely his original regurgitation of the old masters—Khushwant Singh calls him "India's most original thinker"—that earned him cult and canard. It was the timing of his appearance, and the manner of his marketing. In an era of atheism, of existentialist art and literature, of 20th century angst, of the Beatles and flower children, Rajneesh came selling a hedonistic philosophy of 'here and now', a philosophy of pleasure, a philosophy of 'letting go'. Perhaps he believed in it; or perhaps, in a permissive age, he saw it as the perfect instrument for ensnaring a western people seeking solace, a people craving to be exonerated of the guilt of indulgence.

And like most successful masters, he had the good fortune of unearthing for himself disciples who could market and manage his cult, and nurture it into a multi-million dollar empire. The succession of Ma's who took care of his body and his business not only understood his mystic murmurings, but also the limitless possibilities of media and the arcane functionings of money. Ma Anand Sheela, Rajneesh's attractive chief aide in the US always said with pride: "We love publicity—good or bad."

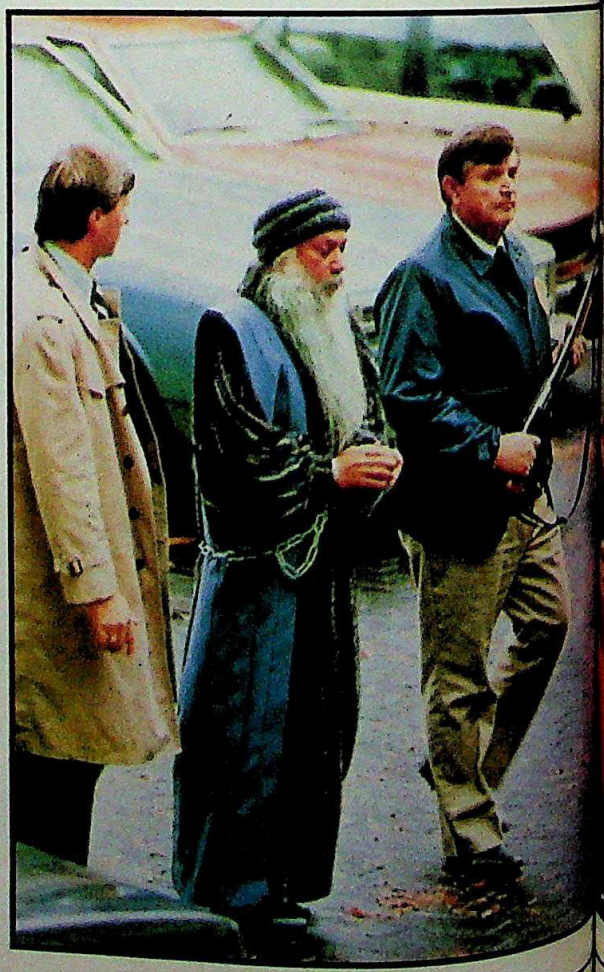
That was a truism Rajneesh Chandra Mohan had imbibed early. The oldest of 11 children of a Jain cloth merchant, he discovered in his very childhood that nothing attracted attention like rebellion. He questioned authority; he experimented with meditation; and at 21, on March 23, 1953, while studying philosophy at Jabalpur, he claimed he'd achieved enlightenment. That obviously wasn't enough; the message had to reach the corners of the earth.

DURING his landmark years—1966: raising consciousness; 1968: dynamic meditation; 1969: initiation of sanyasins at Bombay—he learned to focus attention on himself through the act of outrage, the act of denunciation. And through the years he decried everyone from Jesus Christ to Mahatma Gandhi to Morarji Desai to Rajiv Gandhi. Mother Teresa became Teresa the Terrible, the Ayatollah became Khomaniac, and the Pope was christened Pope the Pollack. The dedication of one of his books read: "This book is dedicated to Jesus, whose fanatic disciple Ronald Reagan tried to do to me what the fanatics of his time did to Jesus." Joseph Stalin he praised for "protecting Communism", which he called "the greatest experiment in human evolution". Religion, politics, sex, philosophy, people—there was virtually no subject on which he did not have a definite and provocative view.

Yet, as with everyone else, with Rajneesh too publicity was a two-edged weapon. It was not only to paint him in lurid hues, making him out to be more satyr than saint, but was also to hound him to the very edges of incarceration. His ashram at Koregaon Park, Pune, outraged the local residents who saw it as the mecca of a licentious soul-seekers-through-sex brigade. As western sanyasins flocked to it, and the locals were kept out, the ire mounted—so much so that cursing the Indian Government, suddenly on May 31, 1981, the prophet of free love decamped with his closest followers for the US, resolved never to come back.

But come back he would, and in the most ignominious of circumstances. The 64,229-acre Rancho Rajneesh he set up in Oregon marked both the acme and nadir of his messianic career. Hewing a habitat out of inhospitable terrain, the Rajneeshites did a remarkable job, as only the spiritually possessed can. But on setting this was an aggressively acquisitive phase in which the Bhagwan greedily acquired 93 Rolls Royces, and even expressed the craving for more: "One for each day of the year." The Bhagwan then retreated into a self-inflicted silence, becoming inaccessible to his devotees.

> "Existence cannot allow a few idiots like Ronald Reagan to destroy this world."
>
> "Stalin was absolutely honest."
>
> "Morarji represents the rotten, dead past. He has no vision of the present."



■ (Clockwise from below) Rajneesh under arrest in the US; at his ranch in Oregon; and an initiation ceremony

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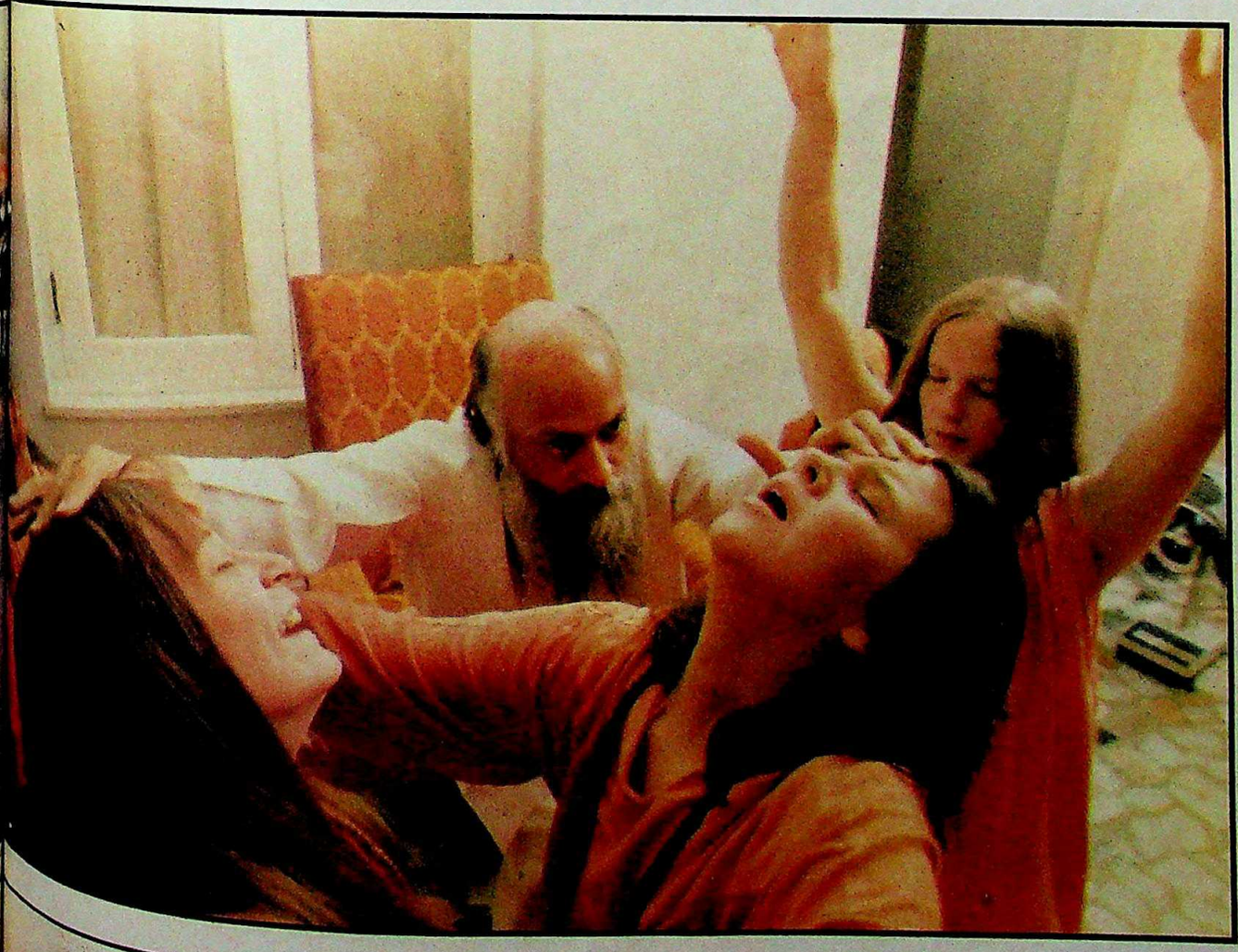
SADHANA FOUNDATION

"I teach a sensuous religion. I teach a sensitive religion. And to me, beauty is far more valuable than truth."

"I want everyone to become an existential gypsy. You don't need roots—you are not trees. You are humans."



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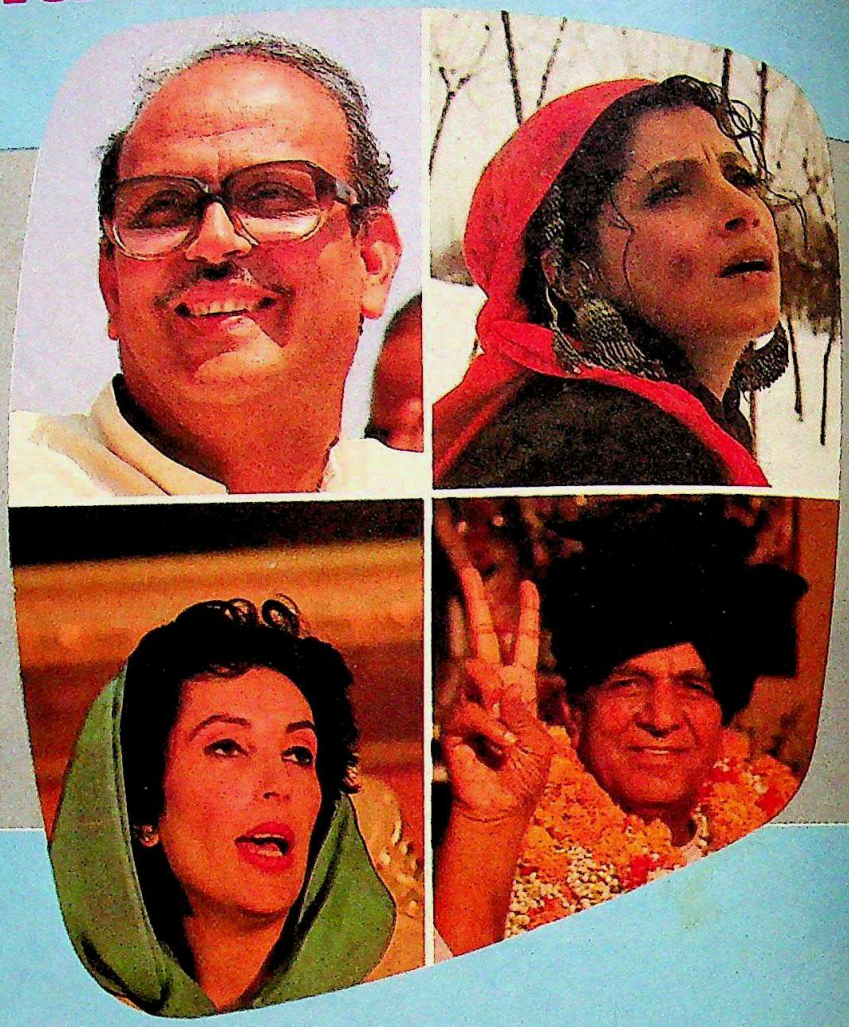

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who used laughing gas and a mood elevator called Ecstasy to hypnotise his audience. This proved a fell blow. Public wrangles ensued. The Bhagwan's US dream began to collapse like a house of cards. He was booked on 35 counts of immigration violations, and of attempted flight to avoid prosecution and conspiracy. Having served 17 days behind bars, Rajneesh used the stratagem of a "plea bargain", coughed up Rs 48 lakh in fines, and agreed to leave the country.

That was simpler said than done. There was more humiliation in store, as country after country denied him entry. So, it was back to India, and off to the cool clime of Manali, before a final retreat to headquarters: Koregaon Park, Pune. Bhagwans cannot be chastened, at least not for long, and Rajneesh showed just an initial touch of fatigue before recovering to his splendiferous, iconoclastic self.

Among all the philosophers he digested, Heraclitus must have been a major one, for Rajneesh actively courted flux all his life. He would suddenly change his identity, his utterances, and his beliefs, and positively revel in seeing his fawning flock follow suit. It was almost like a game to him, a joke he played on lesser beings to gain some private comic relief. And in his last few years he was at his protean best, shifting persona from Rajneesh to Zorba to Osho.

And even if he did not confuse his followers during his lifetime, bewilderment was beginning to mount after his death. The 20-member Inner Circle he had nominated as his successor was playing clandestine, telling little. Sanyasins were seen pleading with reporters for information. The Circle's Chairman, Jayesh, remained elusive, and a power struggle was said to be on, between the North Americans (of Oregon days) and the Germans (the majority of his following).

Meantime, the deification had begun. The samadhi in the Lao Tzu House where he'd lived, proclaimed: Osho, never born, never died, visited the planet earth between December 11, 1931, and January 19, 1990. An epitaph the prophet of hard-sell may well have written himself. —SALIL TRIPATHI in Pune, with TARUN J. TEJPAL

■ **Rajneesh's samadhi inside the Lao Tzu House where he had lived**

SADHANA FOUNDATION

"Live with me, dance with me, rejoice with me. When I am gone continue to rejoice in remembrance of a man who gave you freedom, and individuality."

"I will be dissolved in my people. Just as you can taste the sea from any place and it is salty, you will be able to taste any of my sanyasins and you will find the same taste: the taste of the Blessed One."

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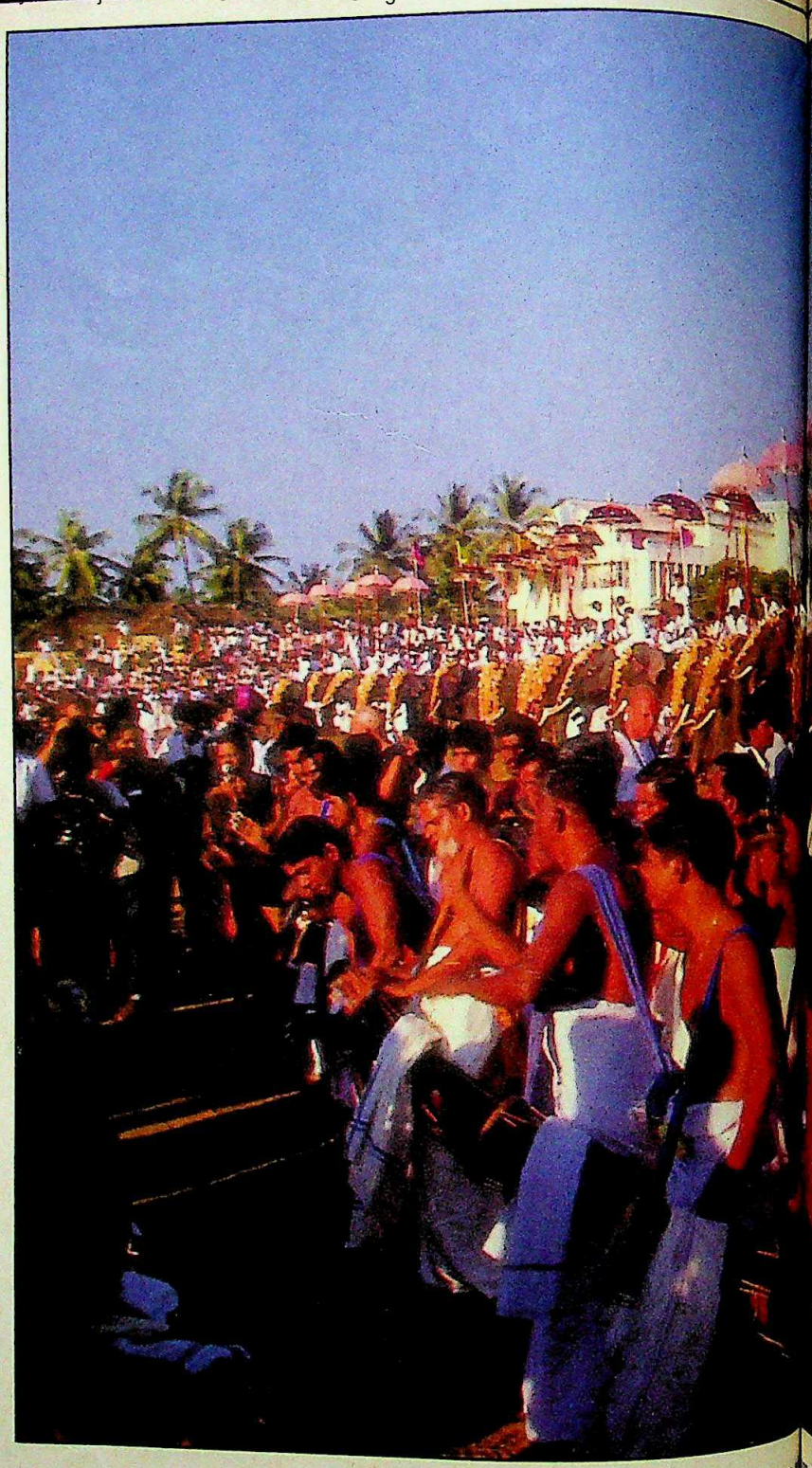

ELEPHANT FESTIVAL

Tusks and Trunks

The recent tourism carnival held in three districts of Kerala not only recreated the splendour of traditional festivals but also presented in Trichur the rare and stunning sight of a phalanx of a hundred and one majestic elephants in their caparisoned glory.

IT was unique. Never before had there been a show so majestic, and on so massive a scale. The Thekkinkad maidan in Trichur sprang to life last fortnight, as crowds jostled to view the rare spectacle of 101 caparisoned elephants majestically lined up, their mahouts atop raising bright coloured parasols, to stage a mock *pooram* (festival), as in Kerala's traditional temple festivals. Bare-chested men blew bugles and conch shells, and the *chendas* (drums) whirred to life for the musical accompaniment the *pandimelam*. Crowds could not be kept at bay by policemen, and broke through the barricades for a closer look.

The show, labelled as "The Great Elephant March", was part of the extravaganza drawn out by the Tourism Department of Kerala to attract foreign tourists. Costing US $400 per person, it was the most expensive tourist package ever planned in Kerala. Apart from the elephant show, it included an elephant ride through the countryside, a boat race in Alleppey in which tourists also participated, and a cruise in the picturesque palm-fringed backwaters against the backdrop of the setting sun. This was followed by another parade of around 100 elephants in Trivandrum, with a tug-of-war between an elephant and 100 youngsters thrown in.

Among the crowds were awe-struck foreigners, for whom it was the show of a lifetime. Said Jan Fetre, a social worker

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"I have never seen so many elephants
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or the local Trichur residents, used to a
ly grand three-day *pooram*, featuring
rade of 30 elephants, the show was no
enthralling. Said Rohan Pillai, a
hur resident: "This may not be as
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y can claim to have seen 101
risoned elephants at a time." The

A rare array of 101 caparisoned elephants

centre of attraction was the tallest elephant, Kandampully Balanarayanan, who was honoured with a gold plaque and ordered to lead the other elephants. Nearly 11 feet tall, Balanarayanan is the most sought after elephant in Kerala, adorning major temple festivals.

Among the many things that enchanted them, the tourists found the names of the elephants most fascinating, for they all sounded like those of the local people themselves. They were also amazed to discover that of the 501 privately owned elephants in the state, only 108 were owned by the *devaswoms* (administrative organisations of temples), and that as many as 393 were owned by private individuals. It was difficult for them to comprehend that people owned elephants and kept them in courtyards. Explained schoolteacher R. Sukumaran Menon: "The majesty of elephants has

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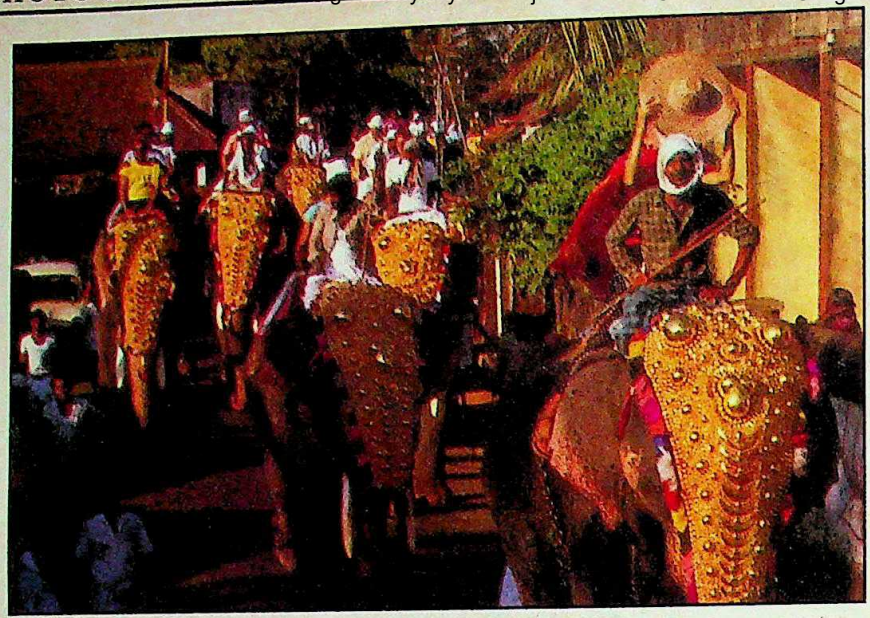


Tourists atop elephants

even inspired Malayalam poets to write touching verse." Also at the show was Menon's brother, P. Anil Lal, proudly flaunting his 45-year-old elephant, Gomati, which he had bought for Rs 50,000, only four months ago. Lal also owns Ganeshan, a sturdy tusker bought for Rs 1.25 lakh two years ago.

Only when it was explained to them that elephants were maintained as a strict business proposition in saw mills, did the tourists understand the economics of it all. Gomati, for example, handles about 40 tonnes a day saving labour costs of nearly Rs 700 while her upkeep requires only around Rs 150. Besides, participation in temple functions also brings in an average of Rs 1,000 each show.

For the younger brand of foreign tourist who usually picks on India for a low budget holiday, the charges proved too steep. Most took only part of the package, sold for just US $ 50. But Tourism Director K. Jayakumar was not too disappointed. Declaring that the aim of the show was only to sell Kerala to the international tourist and not to fill the coffers, he said: "The show generated tremendous interest and that is what matters. In the coming years, it will be promoted as an annual feature and will soon become a major tourist attraction."

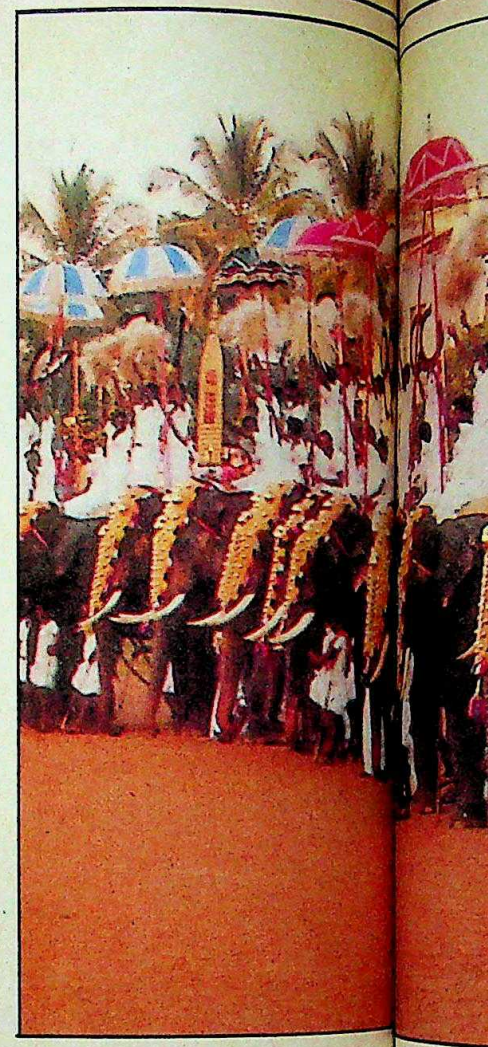
The Tourism Department plans to promote the elephant march show along the lines of the Jaisalmer festival, so that tourists can plan their trip accordingly and be here in time for it every winter. "Whenever a tourist thinks of Kerala, the picture of this spectacle must spring in his mind," says Additional Director of Tourism, Purshottaman.

The elephants provided considerable entertainment during the festival. Half a dozen were chosen to garland the tourists. But in a display of gay abandon, they garlanded all sorts of curious onlookers and even flung marigold garlands into the crowd. One smart mahout fetched compliance from his ward by handing out ripe bananas for every command obeyed.

The tourists realised that the mahouts are not merely animal keepers. It was a tough job to control even a tame elephant, and more so with thousands of people around. Tourism officials were quite tense about this, and relied heavily on the mahouts who did a wonderful job. Among the onlookers were two elephant trainers from Sweden, Sven Mellgrem and Dan Koehl, who could hardly hide their excitement at seeing so many elephants—Sweden has a total of just 12 elephants. They feel that the mahouts of Kerala are among the best in the world.

WHAT thrilled the tourists more than anything else was participating in the ritual feeding of elephants. Many of them were a trifle scared of the huge animals. But the mahouts helped them feed the elephants with bananas.

No less exotic proved the lunch arranged by the Tourism Department. Eating from plaintain leaves, the typical Kerala cuisine of rice, coconut-ground curries, papad and *payasam* (kheer), most declared it was quite an experience. Relishing the spread, they passionately discussed the morning's events, and were anxious to get the photographs they'd taken developed, for back home they were bound to cause quite a sensation. Said



(Top) Impressive lineup; and (right) the spectacular march in Trichur

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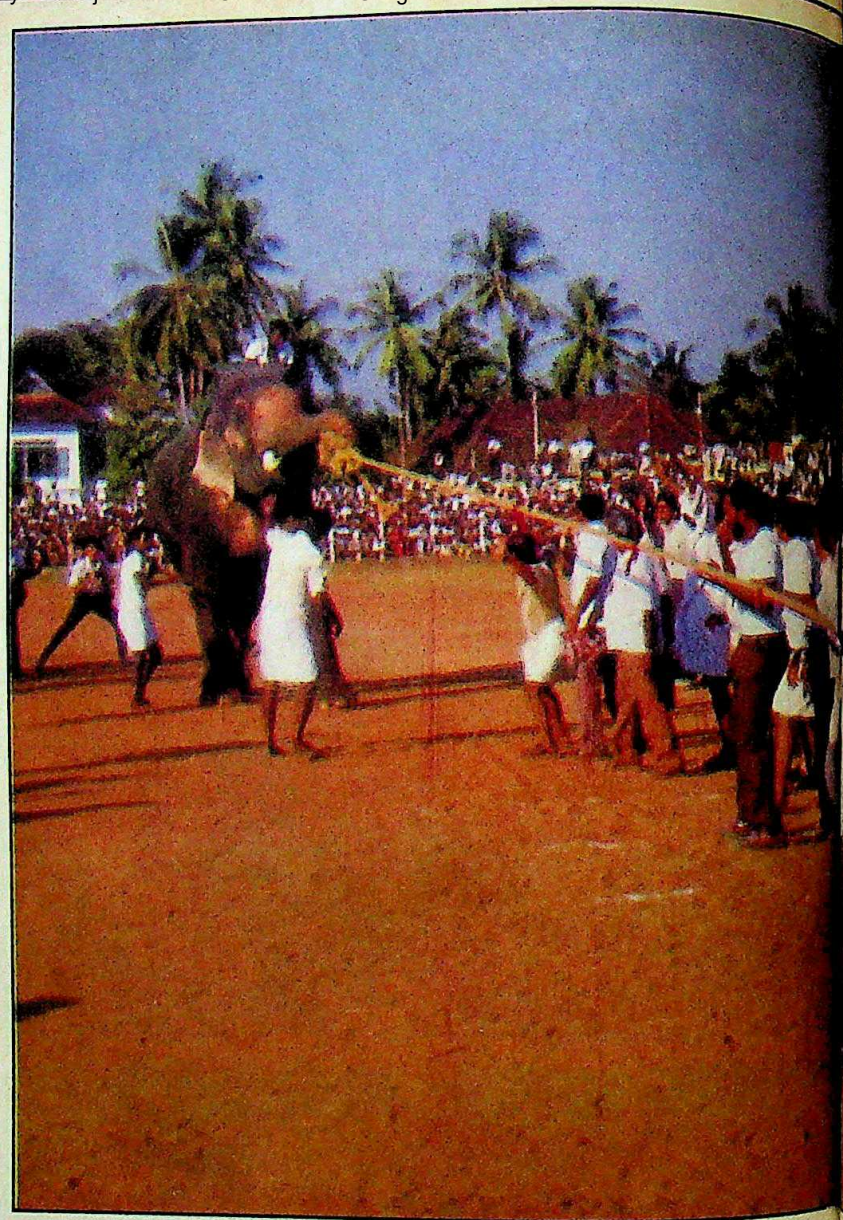
Sheila Watumul from Honolulu: "It is such an unforgettable experience. I have never been on an elephant before."

The greatest excitement of all, of course, proved the elephant march, when the tourists rode on the elephants. A haul from Trichur to Cherpu, a village about 12 kilometres away, the romp was intended to show the tourists the countryside. It was also intended to display to them that in Kerala there's no such thing as an urban-rural divide.

As they walked up to a raised platform, the tourists looked both excited and nervous. Sixty caparisoned elephants and mahouts stood ready in the maidan to take them for the ride. Every time a tourist managed to firmly get on to an elephant, he was cheered by the local crowd. Said Margaret Langlois from Hamilton in Canada: "Keralites are so warm and affectionate."

Anthea Lonsdale, a Chinese tourist from Hong Kong nervously hung on to her husband in the beginning. She seemed to be having second thoughts about having got into the entire elephant extravaganza. But half an hour later, she could be seen gaily waving out to onlookers and clicking away on her camera. She even went on a 10-day trip on elephants in the wild forests near Trichur. Said she: "I was scared as I had never been on an elephant before. Now, I cannot hide my excitement." It was a similar experience for actress Lisa from Canada.

The show evoked both praise and criticism. While many enjoyed the fun and the glorious spectacle, some cultural organisations did not take kindly to it and openly expressed their resentment, questioning the display which they felt marred the religious sanctity of the original festival at Trichur.



Tug-of-war between a hundred boys and one elephant; and (left) tourists being garlanded by an elephant

The next day the festival scene shi to picturesque Alleppey, the "Venice the East". Criss-crossed by canals, the was ideal for cruises and boat races on backwaters. Nearly 15 snake boats re ied themselves for the boat race event oars splashed in unison, the foreign aboard gingerly balanced themselves took shots of the breathtaking scene The race ended with a boat ca "Vallankara Chundan" grabbing the prize of Rs 10,000.

The last of the shows was hel Trivandrum. This time it was with caparisoned elephants, in the Ce Stadium, which was packed to capa The Trichur *pooram* was once again

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to the accompaniment of the *Panchavadyam*, another traditional form musical accompaniment in which five instruments are used.

An elephant race organised with three elephants proved hilarious. Two ran in different directions and the elephant Murugan, with his steady gentle pace, reached the finishing line. He was rewarded with the first prize—a huge bunch of bananas. An elephant scheduled to perform acrobatics refused to oblige and the event had to be called off. Instead, a tug-of-war was arranged between the elephant Wynad Mohanan and a hundred youths. The show of strength got off to a good start, but Mohanan let the rope slip, forcing the determined youths tumbling. On the second round, the rope snapped and it was decided to ring the show to a close.

With events like the *Kalaripayattu*, the traditional martial art form of Kerala figuring in the show, Trivandrum had the air of a cultural festival about it. The extravaganza ended with a seaside barbecue dinner and fireworks.

Apart from the fun and games, the tourists also showed keen interest in the habits and behaviour pattern of the elephants as well as their changing ownerships. Around three or four decades ago, an elephant was more of a status symbol with rich Namboodiris keeping them in their courtyards. With a changed socio-economic scenario, today hardly a dozen Namboodiris can afford to own elephants. Their maintenance has become prohibitive, costing over Rs 100 a day. Neelakandhan Namboodiri, who owned Gopi, a 40-year-old elephant, said he would have loved to tend him at home rather than send him to far off temple festivals and to the saw mills to pull huge logs of timber. But he has no choice. The cost is just too high for him.

Most of the privately owned elephants have a tough time going from festival to festival, sometimes walking for over 12 hours a day. "Environmentalists are ready to do anything to save monkeys, but not one talks about the inhuman treatment meted out to elephants," complains Babu, a mahout for the last 16 years. He is not the only one who feels this way. Krishnankutty, another mahout in Gurvayoor, shares the sentiment. He recently wrote a poem imagining that he is an elephant, who dreams about the blood of his tormentors on his tusks.

The elephant festival, it is hoped, will help the dollars flow into the Tourism Department's coffers in the years to come, for there can hardly be a doubt that the spectacle of more than a hundred elephants arrayed in their finest is one that lacks parallel worldwide.

—RAMESH MENON in Trichur and Trivandrum

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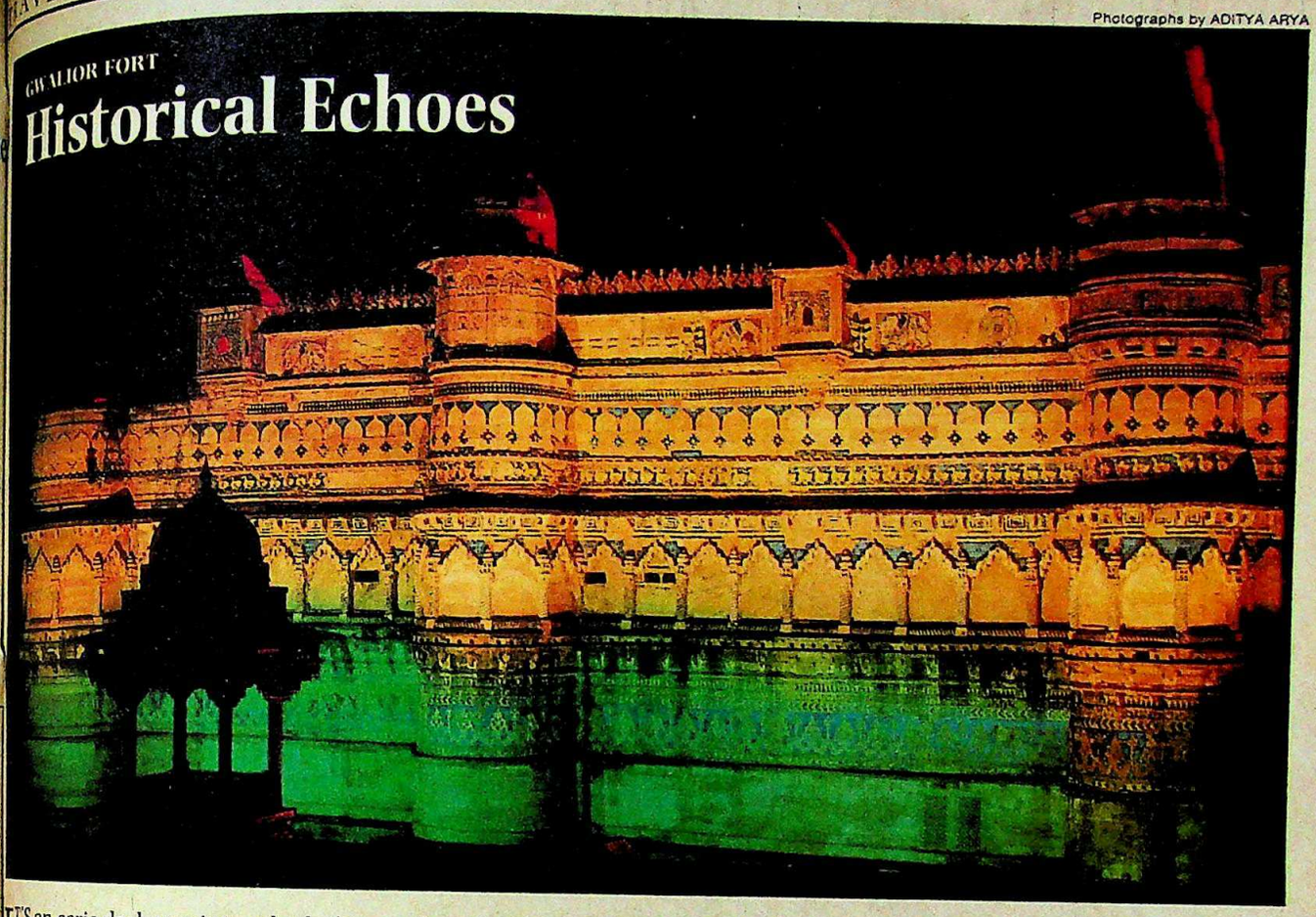
GWALIOR FORT

Historical Echoes



IT'S an eerie darkness into which the yellowish light bursts like a flame. "I am the voice of Gopachal, the ancient hill of Gwalior..." a voice seems to come from the bowels of the earth. It sounds disturbingly familiar. Could it be Amitabh Bachchan's famous vocal chords bellowing into the deserted winter night atop Gwalior Fort?

Also familiar are the other voices wafting through the blue-green, or pulsed red spaces, created by Tapas Sen's masterful lighting in the 45-minute Gwalior Fort *son et lumiere* expected to be officially opened this month, with the Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation footing the bill of Rs 36 lakh. Sayeed Jaffery, Jalal Agha, Manohar Singh, Gerson Da Cunha, Pratap Sharma, Dolly Thakur, K.K. Raina, Ronnie Screwvalla and others mix legend and history to recreate the ghosts of this historic fort which has seen heroism, romance and treachery.

Directed by actor-director Manohar Singh, with B.V. Karanth as guiding light, the show relives the history of the Turk invaders, Mahmud of Ghazni, the Tomar kings, the Mughal kings (Babur called the fort a "pearl among the fortresses of Hind"), the Rajput kings and their even braver queens, the British, Jhansi ki Rani, and the Scindias, with the 15th century Man Mandir Palace as backdrop. Tellingly alive are the scenes when the Rajput queens go willingly to their deaths by fire, and those depicting the horrors of the prison that the fort had become when Guru Har Gobind Singh was an inmate.

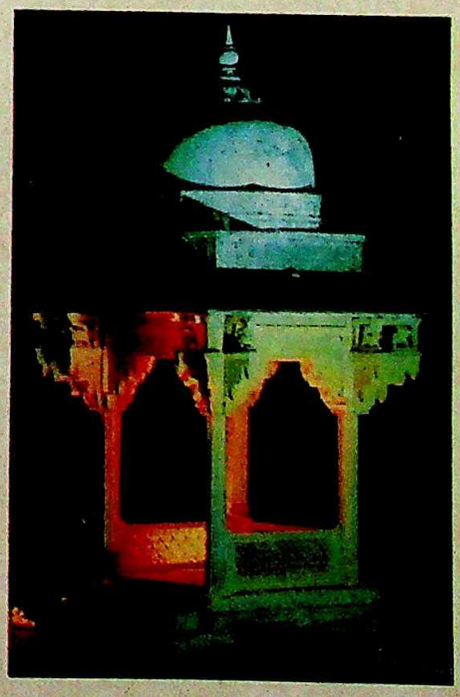
But what makes it memorably haunting is the music. The voices of Kumar Gandharva, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj (his son Sarang Dev has along with B.V. Karanth put it together), and Ila Arun singing Dhrupad linger on long after the lights go out.

The only wrong note is the BBC accent of some of the voices in the English edition—the Hindi one comes through more vibrantly. And the script could have been less cliched in places.

The *son et lumiere* was to have been inaugurated last June by Rajiv Gandhi. He couldn't make it. The show was finally flagged off without fanfare, in November by former minister of state for railways, Madhav Rao Scindia.

Gwalior is the first in a series of *son et lumieres*, according to A.J. Jaspal, chief production coordinator, who had also set up the one at Red Fort with Melville de Mellow in 1965, and the ones in Sabarmati in 1971, and Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir and Buxar later. On the cards is the show in Port Blair's Cellular Jail, to be directed by Manohar Singh and produced by the Government of India and the state Government of the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Next would be

Man Mandir Palace



Kurukshetra produced by the Haryana Government. And the battle-cries of Mahabharata will finally be heard on the appropriate grounds.

Son et lumiere is the new bandwagon for the creative people. But will there be enough audience for the far-flung places? Or will all that light and sound just echo back in the night?

—MADHU JAIN

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UNITED STATES

Engineering Success

Indian students excel in American universities

SCENE: a university classroom with rows of computers. At the end of the third row, Rajeev Raje sits hunched over his computer, intently pondering over a programme in parallel processing. Beside him are 20 other graduate students, staring bleary-eyed at their computer screens. A few are Indians, others from Taiwan, China and South Korea.

A scene from the Asian Institute of Technology, Manila? No, this is a computer laboratory in Syracuse University, New York, though one could hardly guess that from the two American students in class.

It's a typical scene. In engineering schools across the US, foreign students, a high proportion of them Indians, swamp graduate courses (or post-graduate as they are known in India). Says Professor Nandkishor Abhyankar, 31, who teaches mechanical and aerospace engineering at Syracuse University: "People prefer foreign students to do engineering research. They have very good mathematical backgrounds. And they work hard, even over weekends."

The numbers tell the story. In 1987-88, more than 70,000 foreign students joined US programmes in engineering, the highest enrolment among all academic subjects. The largest numbers come from Taiwan, China and India, in that order. Of the 21,010 Indian students enrolled in American universities in 1987-88, 34 per cent were in engineering schools, according to the Institute of International Education in New York.

At the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where foreign students are restricted to 50 per cent of each department, more than 330 foreign students recently joined graduate courses in computer science, electrical and civil engineering. Half of them were Indians.

Similarly, at Syracuse University, of the 400 foreign students who joined graduate engineering programmes last year, about 25 per cent were from India. And last September, at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, about 12 per cent of the total graduate enrolment of 290 students were Indians, more than any other foreign student group.

Raje's story would not be unusual. Nine of his 60 classmates at the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, Bombay, where he graduated in engineering in 1984, studied at Syracuse. And Raje knows 16 others from the same class who study in the US.

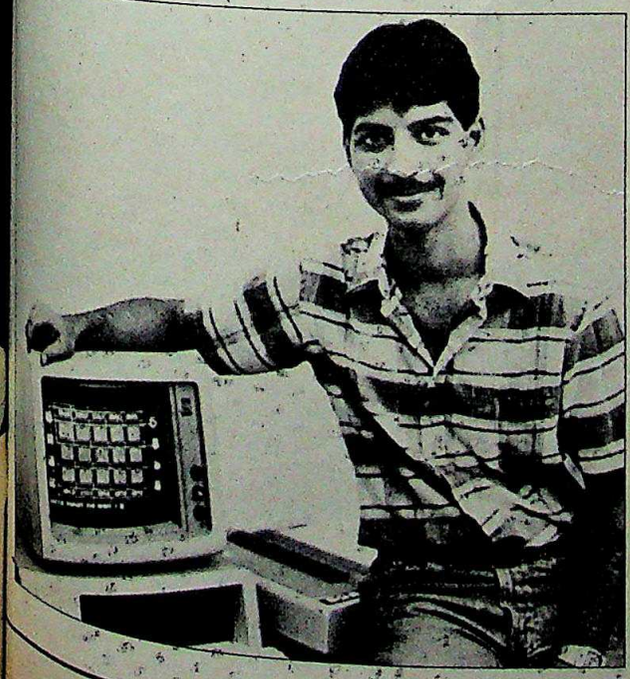
"It's unusual to find an American in class. Indians compete with one another and with Asians, not with Americans," he says. The reason: after getting their bachelor's degrees, American engineering students usually don't enrol in graduate schools. Many have taken loans for their undergraduate studies. To pay those back and be financially independent, they choose to join industry directly, with starting salaries above $30,000 (Rs 500,000). For Indians and other foreign students, however, a master's degree is vital for a toehold in the US corporate world. It's their passport to freedom and fortune.

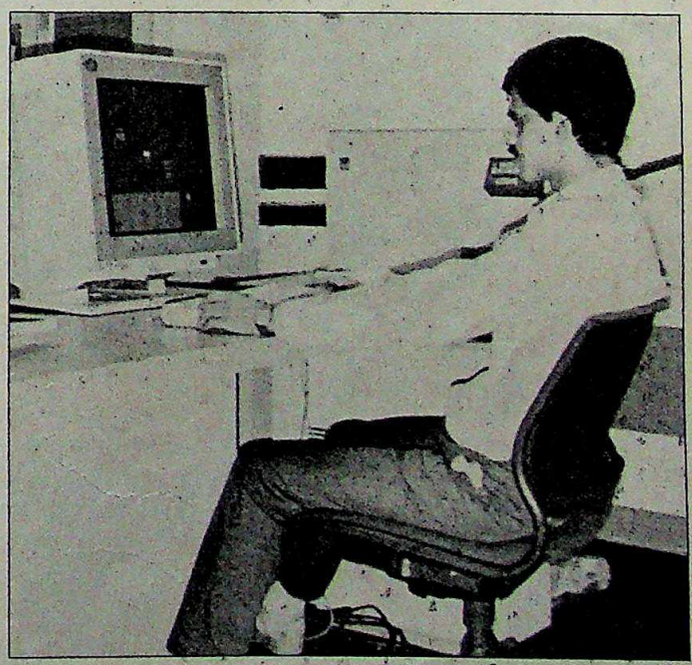
The universities themselves welcome foreign students, who carry out research for low-cost engineering projects funded by US industry and the Government. For instance, Gautam Dey at the University of South Carolina is research assistant on a technical project funded by the electronics firm, Westinghouse. Jayant Roy, 24, a computer engineering student at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, is working on a computer hardware project funded by the US Government.

Getting assistantships is anything but easy. Since they offer both the cost of tuition (between $6,000 and $10,000 a year) and a personal stipend (between $600 and $700 a month), competition is

Ram Pandit, University of Illinois

With a teaching job at Iowa State University, Pandit is doubtful of returning home.





Rajeev Raje, Syracuse University

According to Raje, Indians at graduate schools compete with one another and Asians, not Americans.

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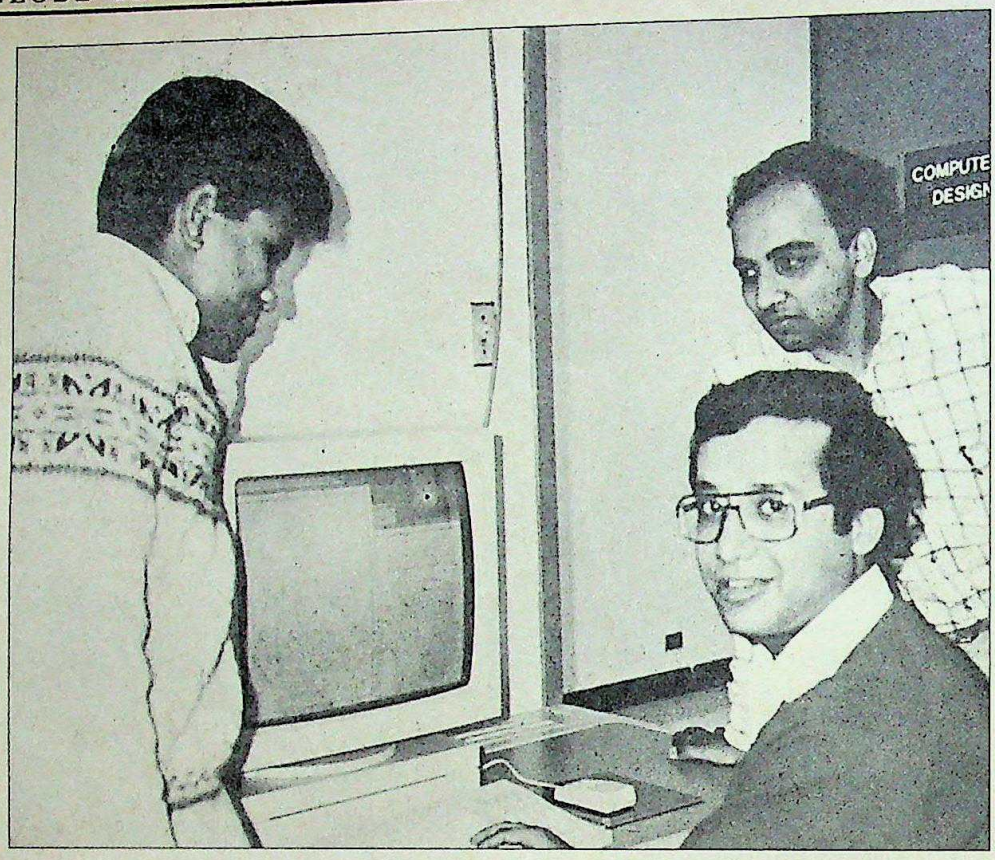

Jayant Roy, University of Cincinnati, Ohio

What disgusts Roy about work in India is the lack of motivation, and the fact that the projects are not sophisticated enough and do not require much brain-power.

cutthroat. But students from the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) usually get financial aid right from the first term.

But despite the difficulties, the system suits everyone. Students get financial aid. Professors get help on their research work. Companies get their research work done at relatively low costs. The university retains about 25 per cent of the funds given for research.

The hard work doesn't end with getting an assistantship. Eight-to-ten hour working days, seven days a week, are common. And besides, research and teaching assistants have to maintain high grades, to ensure that their financial aid will be continued the next year.

But the toil pays off. On completing their master's degrees, most Indian students start off in industry with salaries of $ 30,000 and more, sufficient to maintain the sort of life-style that attracted them to the US in the first place. Salaries in teaching jobs—between $ 38,000 and $ 45,000—match those in industry. Ram Pandit, 27, who completed his doctorate in industrial engineering from the University of Illinois in December has secured a teaching job at Iowa State University. Will he return home? "Doubtful," he says.

Most Indian engineering students in the US would answer the same way. The reasons: higher living standards and superior research facilities.

Five years ago, Pandit completed a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from Karnataka University, Dharwar. He wanted to go West because both his father and grandfather had studied abroad and it seemed part of a tradition. So, in his final year, he applied to several US universities, got admission to four and finally chose the South Dakota School of Mines.

NOT all Indians come to the US immediately after getting their degrees. Roy, a graduate of IIT Kharagpur, decided to move after a one-year stint in the US working on a project for Tata Burroughs Ltd. One reason was the lack of motivation in his job at home. "I got disgusted. The projects you work on in India just aren't sophisticated and you don't have to use your brains," he says.

Whatever the reason, the lure of the US is irresistible for most. Virtually entire classes of engineering students in India take the Graduate Record Examination General (GRE), required to get into graduate engineering programmes in the US. "Even if you don't want to take it (the GRE), you do it because everyone else is doing it," says Roy.

At the IITs, students find it easier than their American counterparts to tackle the GRE advanced tests in specialised fields of engineering. Student-run 'question banks' are available that consist of questions jotted down by students just after they take the test.

G. Prasad, 24, who is doing a second master's degree at the Pennsylvania State University, State College, recalls that he gave one of these 'question banks' to an American friend. "The guy couldn't believe it. He said this is really unfair," he says.

With high test scores and good recommendations from college professors, most Indian students get accepted in two or more US universities. Armed with their admission forms, students then apply for visas. Most utter the little white lie that they'll return to India on completing their studies. And consular officials willingly turn a deaf ear, despite knowing that most students will secure jobs with established engineering firms in the US, eager to grab fresh talent. Most firms even process the paperwork required to permit their young foreign employees to stay on in the US.

There are problems, of course. Social assimilation is one. Complains Dey: "I like the US as a place to visit. But it's not my country. It's not possible for Americans to treat us as one of their own." Dey plans to return home.

But he is an exception. Few other Indian engineers have any intention of returning home. For them, the sun rises in the West. And as they go about looking for a place under it, they are helping to engineer a minor revolution in industry there.

—GAURI GOYAL

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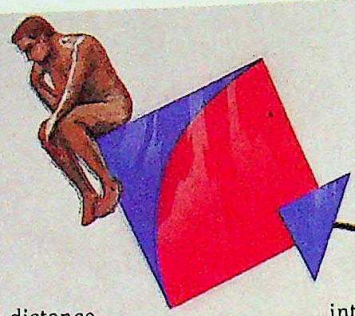

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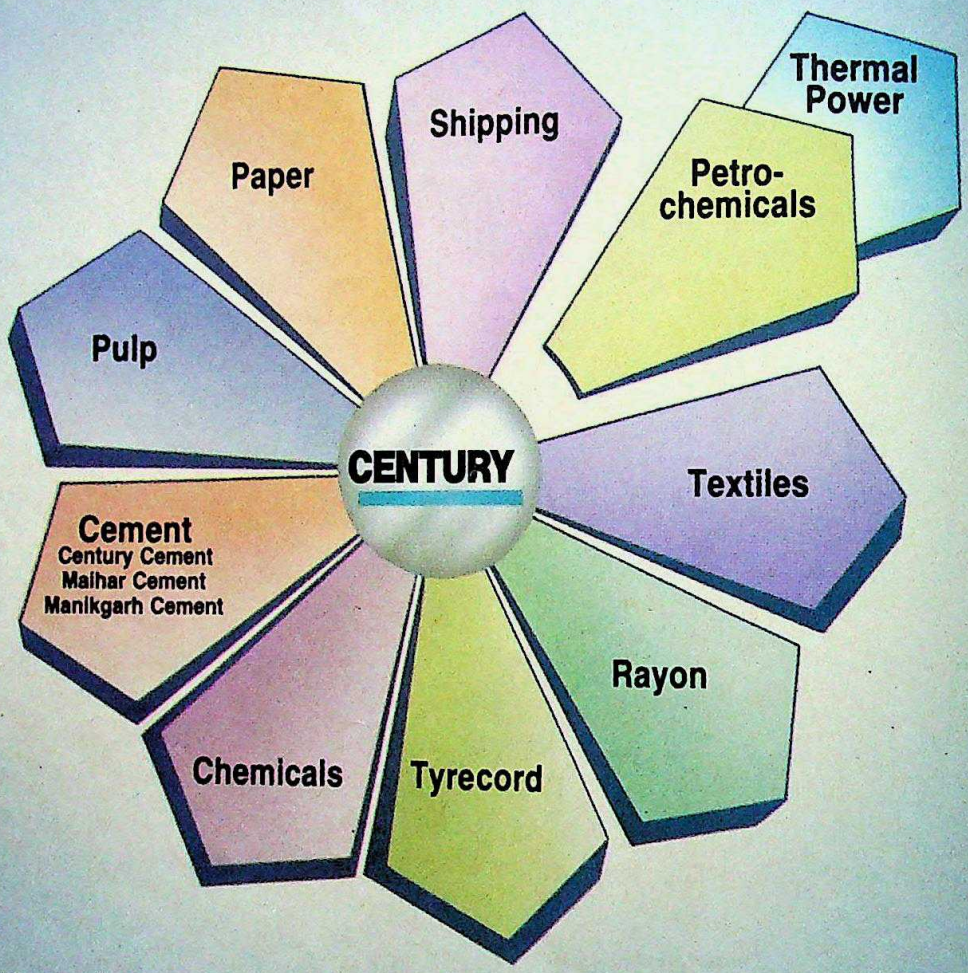
One of India's most progressive companies is also the most diversified



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CALCUTTA

Timely Transfusion

Hi-tech medical facilities come to the metro

Q. Why is Calcutta's public health care system like a patient with terminal illness?

A. Because it is perpetually on the verge of permanent collapse.

FOR patients, that's no joke. The city's public hospitals are understaffed, their facilities inadequate, the wards overflowing. Five months ago, there was a series of deaths of newborn babies in the Calcutta Medical College Hospital, the city's most prestigious and the country's oldest. Reason: lack of basic amenities and elementary hygiene. State Health Minister Prasanta Sur is helpless: "Is there anyone efficient enough to tackle the conditions in the hospitals?"

In contrast is the situation on the private health front. Over the past year or so, a host of ultra-modern nursing homes and hospitals, and high-tech diagnostic centres boasting state-of-the-art facilities have mushroomed—the Medinova Diagnostic Centre; the Wockhardt Medical Centre; the Nightingale Diagnostic Eye Care and Research Centre and the B.M. Birla Heart Research Centre. And more are in the offing. Last fortnight, the Peerless group of companies announced its plan to set up a Rs 30-crore, 300-bed hospital in collaboration with Hospitax S.A. of France. The Chhabria group also proposes to set up a Rs 30-crore hospital with know-how from an undisclosed European hospital consultancy firm. A few of them reserve beds and offer concessions to the poor.

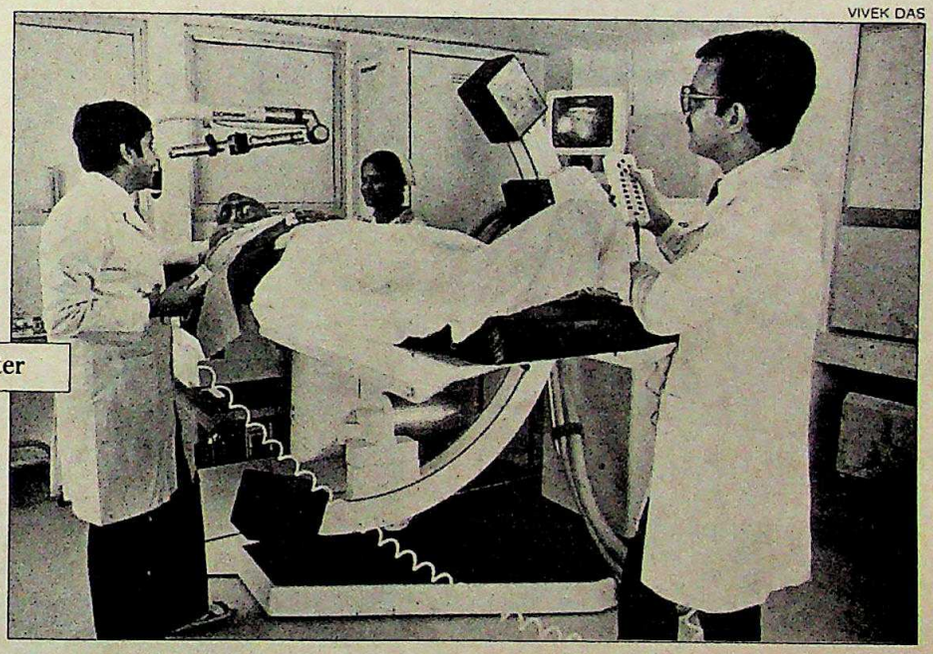
Leading the medical invasion was the Medinova Medical Centre, promoted by the Hyderabad-based Rs 22-crore Standard Medical and Pharmaceuticals Ltd. Encouraged by the runaway success of its first diagnostic centre in Hyderabad set up in 1985, the company spread to Bangalore and Pune. In October 1988, Medinova came to Calcutta with an investment of Rs 10 crore.

Medinova boasts an imaging department with the latest in scanners, both whole body CT (computerised tomography) and ultrasound. One special facility is CT-guided biopsies, not routinely done anywhere else in the country. The biochemistry department is one of the most modern in India and its endoscopic centre is next only to the much older Kothari Institute of Gastroenterology.

Medinova Chairman C.C. Reddy likes to describe the venture as a "social concept". The centre claims that during the past year, it provided free diagnostic services valued at Rs 3.11 lakh to 31,000 cases besides concessions worth Rs 10.46 lakh.

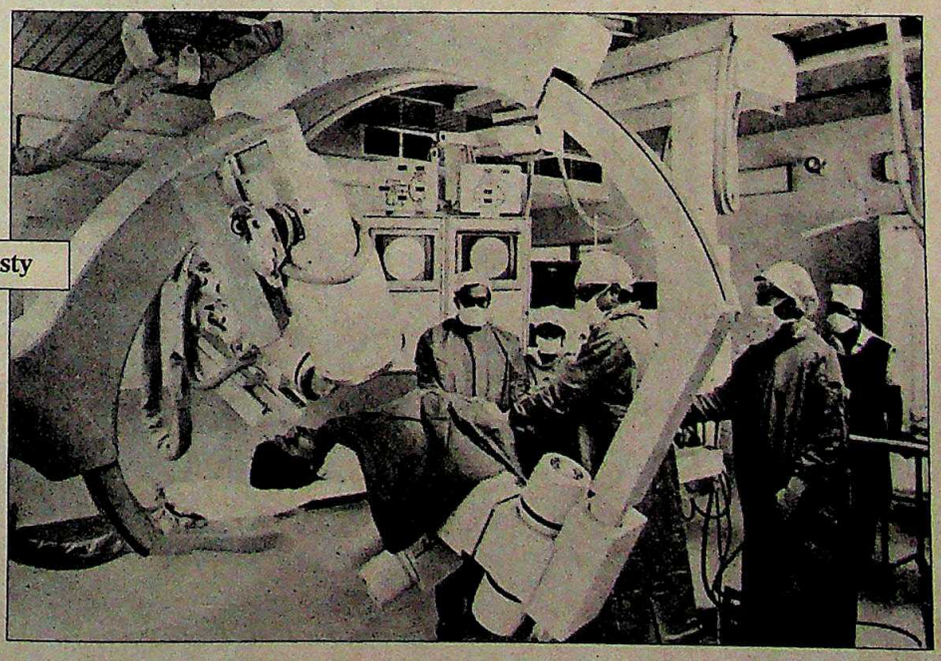
If Medinova was a diagnostic milestone in Calcutta, the trend-setter in medicare was the Wockhardt Medical Centre, a plush day-care centre promoted by pharmaceutical company

VIVEK DAS



Wockhardt Medical Centre: lithotripter

A host of ultra-modern nursing homes, sophisticated hospitals and impressive diagnostic centres have mushroomed.



Birla Heart Research Centre: angioplasty

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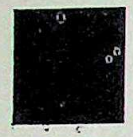

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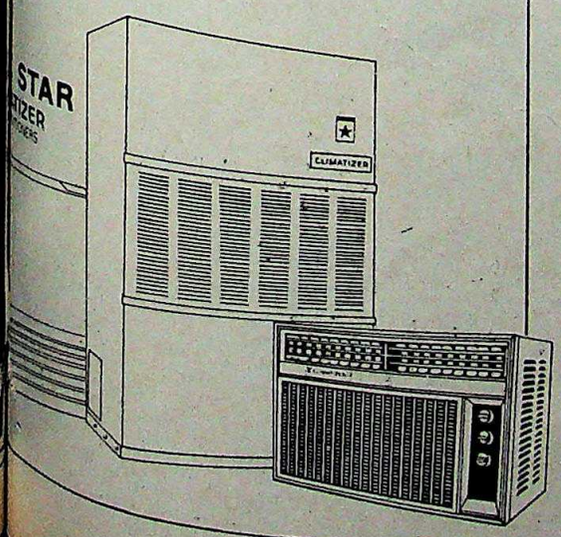

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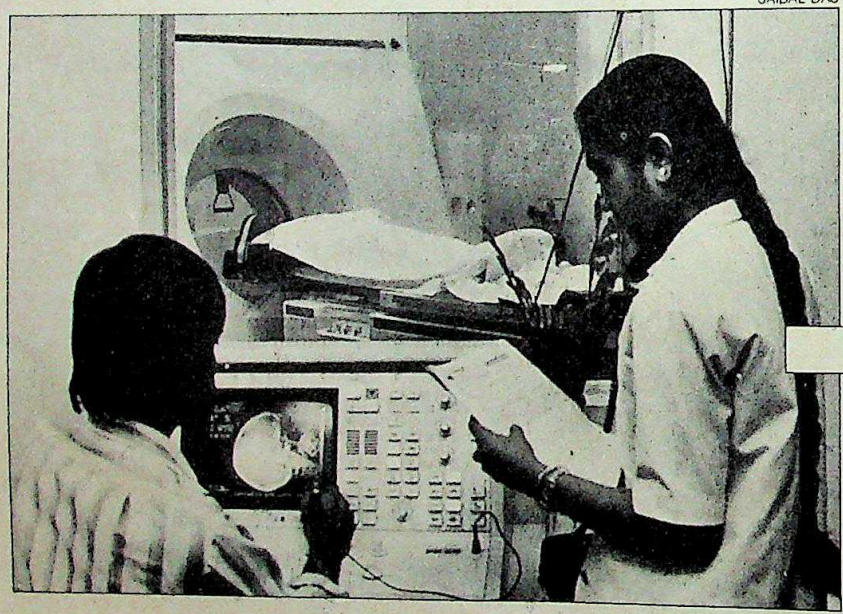
Wockhardt. Total investment was a massive Rs 6 crore. Taking pride of place at the centre is a fourth-generation lithotripter for the non-surgical removal of gall and kidney stones. In just one year, the machine has been used for 230 kidney stone and 54 gall stone removals. Though a lithotripsy costs Rs 15,000 people pour in not just from Calcutta—65 per cent of the patients are from Bangladesh. Says Manager Sumedha Sen: "More patients come here for lithotripsy than for blood testing."

There are other equally sophisticated machines: lasers for the non-surgical management of ophthalmic problems, CT scanners which can also be used to carry out biopsies, 3-dimensional scanners and sophisticated ultrasonographs with probes for endo-rectal examination.

Equally impressive is the Nightingale Diagnostic Eye Care and Research Centre opened in September last year. Beginning with a bank loan of Rs 7 crore, it was the first to introduce the Holter monitor which permits round-the-clock, beat-to-beat analysis of the heart. It also has the latest equipment used to evaluate nervous system functions. Another special facility is the frozen section biopsy. "Here, a biopsy which normally takes three to seven days elsewhere can be done in just 30 minutes," says Wing Commander (retd.) T. Choudhury, general manager of the centre.

FACILITIES for the treatment of heart ailments at the Rs 14-crore B.M. Birla Heart Research Centre surpass the country's best. "The Birla centre is what Calcutta cannot afford not to have and yet could not afford to have until now," says Dr Debal Sen, who is in charge of the cardiology department.

SAIBAL DAS



Nightingale Diagnostic: CT scan

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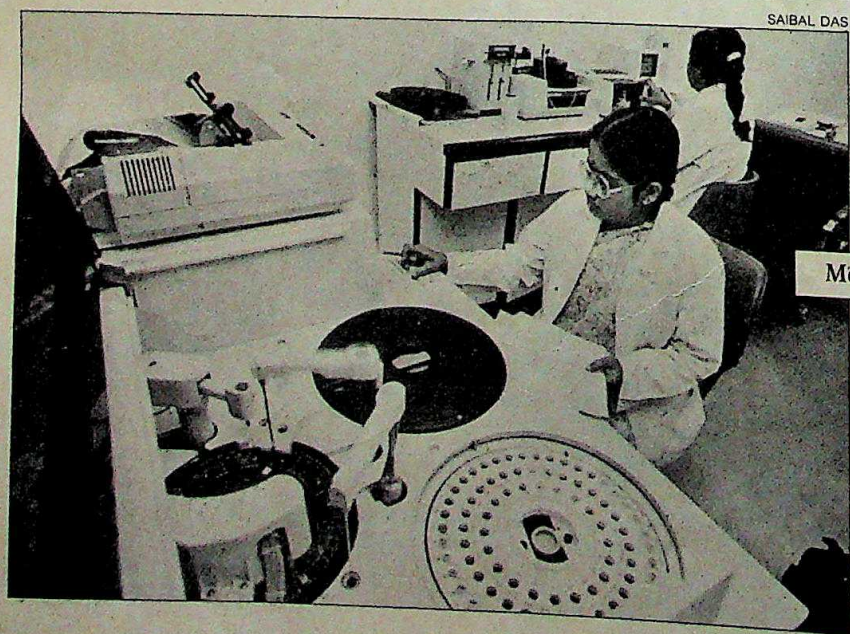

Medinova: automated chemistry analysis

Though the centre is to be formally opened only in February, it has begun functioning in phases since January—conducting on an average two heart surgeries a day, reportedly with 100 per cent success. With four related departments—diagnostics, cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery and nuclear medicine—the centre will offer an integrated medical care system, comparable to the world's best.

The centre also employs among others Dr Devi P. Shetty, a cardiac surgeon from the UK who plans to carry out cardiomyoplasty operations—not done even in the UK—which involve the replacement of cardiac muscle with skeletal tissue. Then there is Dr Alok Roy, a nuclear medicine expert besides 23 visiting specialist consultants.

Last month, Medinova launched a fortnight-long campaign for the Medinova Health Card. Costing Rs 190 for a year, it promises the holder a 75 per cent discount on all diagnostic services and investigation worth Rs 6,000. Other Medinova offerings: "The Master health checkup" and "Well-women checkup". The tab: from Rs 450 to Rs 600.

Though other hospitals dismiss Medinova's campaign as a gimmick, with facilities at a discount, they won't be far behind. The Wockhardt Centre has tailor-made health schemes for various companies. It has also introduced a family health checkup card (the cost for a family of four is Rs 1,500 a year) and a dental checkup card for schoolchildren (Rs 100 for three years). Nightingale now has introduced similar packages.

While the charges of these private centres are high, a few reserve a portion of their facilities and offer concessions to poor patients.

Perhaps this is one case where too much of a good thing is entirely welcome. At prices that are not killing.

—FARZAND AHMED

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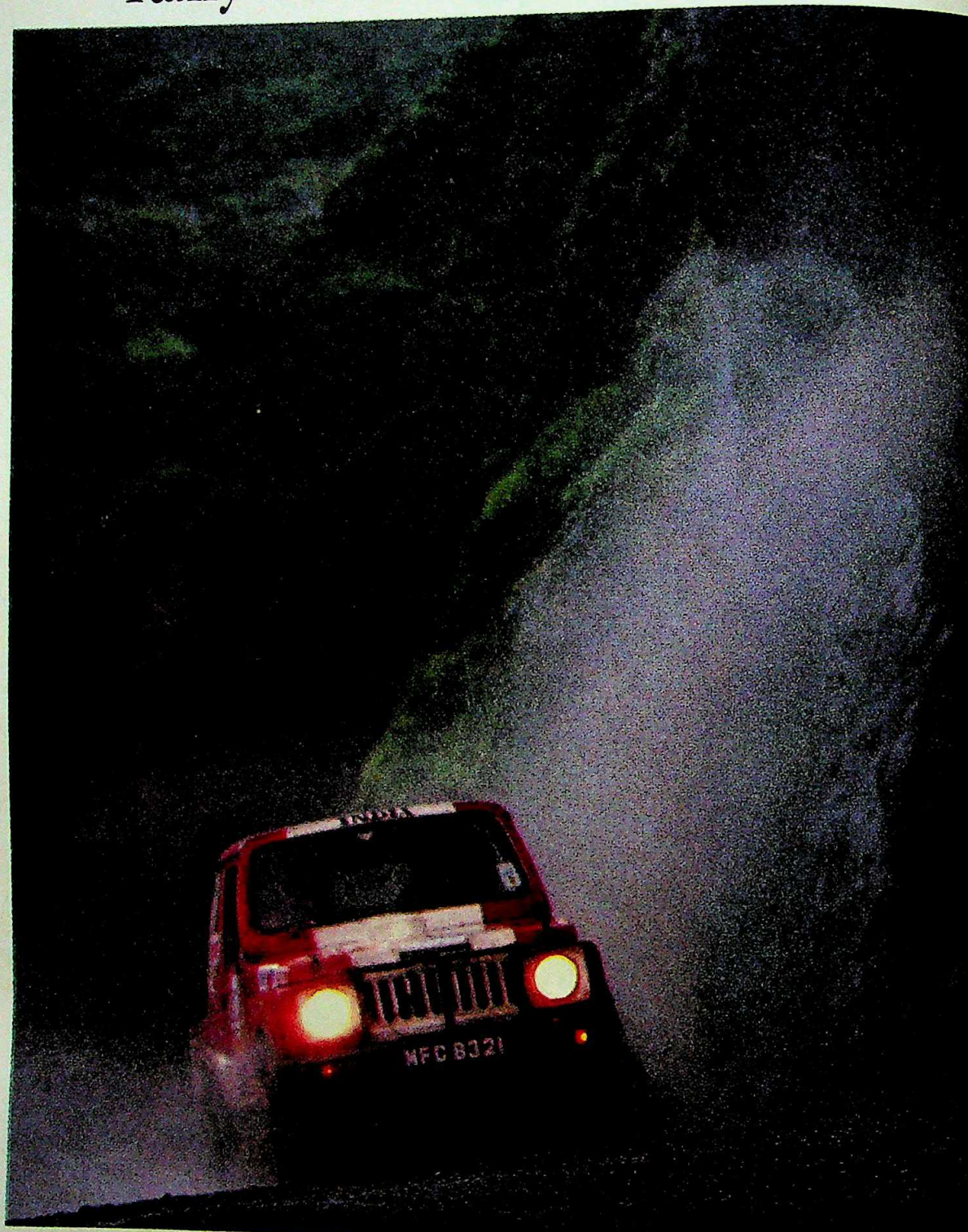
You don't have to be India's ace Rally Driver to be a Raymond's man.



Twenty-five year old Farid Bhathena, India's fastest man on four wheels, has set a blistering pace in sprint and rally driving. In 1983, at eighteen, he made a splendid debut at the Sholavaram Raceway track: 1st in the Formula Inter Sprint.

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impossible mountain passes and defying monsoon storms, Farad may, on occasion, be seen leading the field in a dark blue, sparkle polyester-and-wool suit tailored from another winner, Raymond's Sapphire.

You don't have to be India's ace rally driver to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

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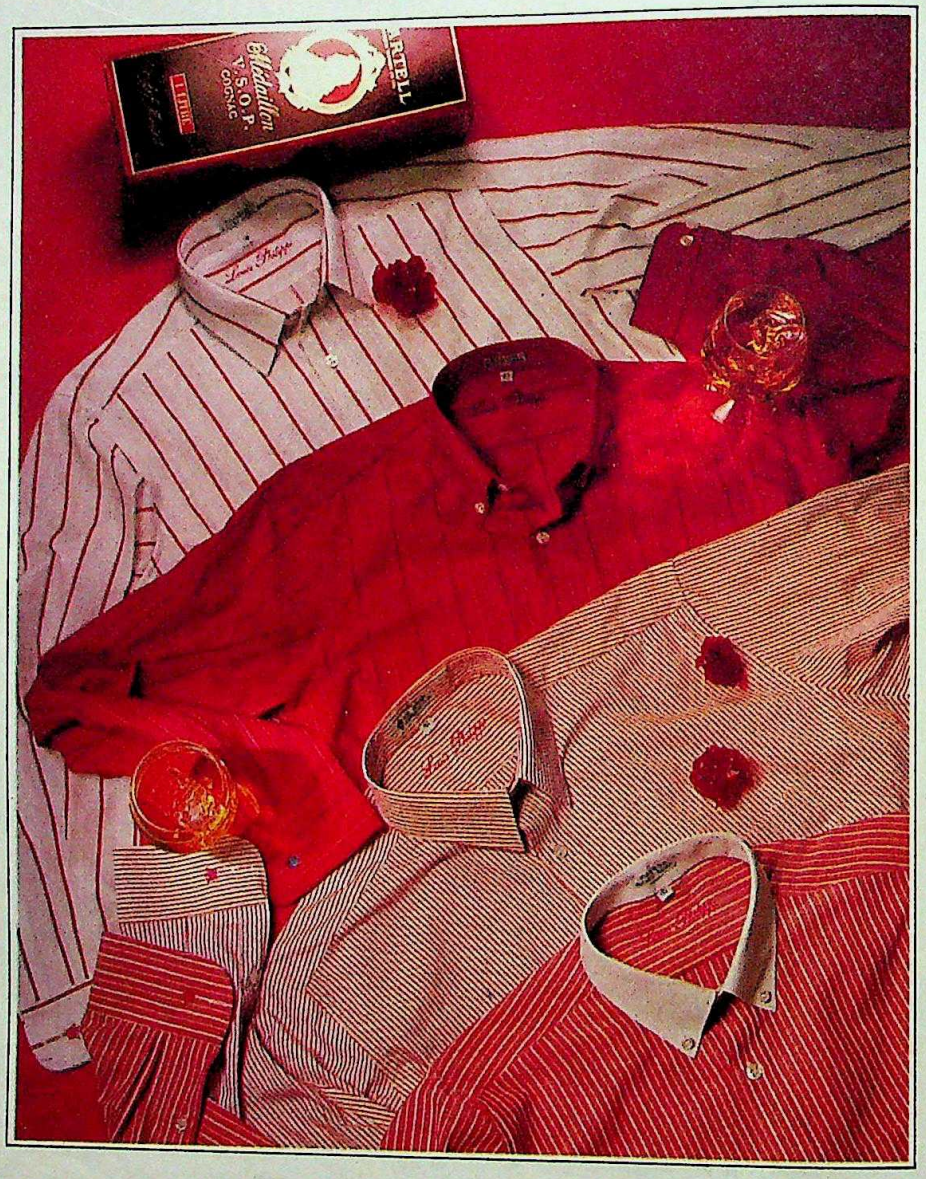

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Laying it Bare

Probing India's sexual psyche

INTIMATE RELATIONS
Exploring Indian Sexuality
by SUDHIR KAKAR
Viking
Price: Rs 125; Pages: 161

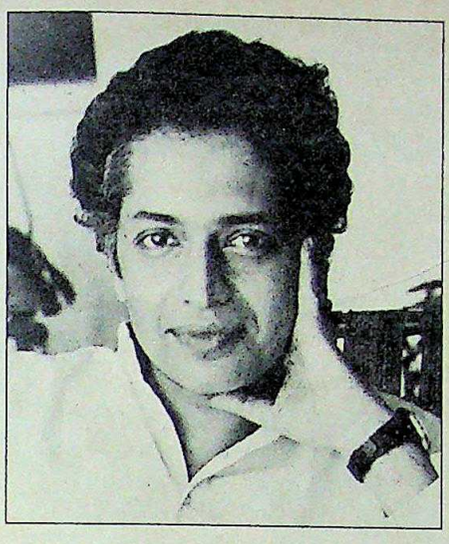
AS a nation, we generally look at psychiatrists and psychiatry with trepidation. The attitude towards psychiatrists is pretty much you-only-need-one-if-you have-gone-absolutely-raving mad. Most prefer to carry on their lives burying their emotional problems and hang-ups as far deep as possible. Thinking or talking about them would only legitimise it. A cry-from-primal cry from the highly publicised therapies developed over the last years in the West.

In fact, the West has now reached the other extreme—the peak in ventilating emotion, so much so a dinner conversation can sound like a therapy session. A westerner will go to a psychiatrist once a week "to work on his inner self", much the same way he goes to an exercise class. But, we have few such therapists to go to and few enlightened enough to want to go.

Sudhir Kakar's exploration into Indian sexuality is bound to make enough people uncomfortable, because he takes almost everybody on. Kakar analyses sexual relations between men and women in Indian literature and in Indian films. His method of using the narrative form—telling lengthy, fascinating stories from the most varied of sources, Indian epics and tacky films and giving them first whole to the reader and then cutting them up in little bits with his perspective—is astute.

The chapter on Mahatma Gandhi's sex life will upset many who don't like such things discussed or analysed. But clearly, Gandhi's sexual life had an enormous effect on Gandhi the man, politician and leader.

If one wants to be sympathetic to Gandhi, one can only say: "Why, O why couldn't he just allow himself to be human?" To which a California therapist could add: "What could be healthier than a good lay?" But Kakar is extraordinarily gentle in his understanding of Gandhi's psyche. Or is he letting him off the hook, knowing he is stepping on hallowed ground?



Kakar: therapeutic effect

"Our intention is not to 'analyse' Gandhi's conflict in any reductionist sense but to seek to understand it in all its passion—and obscurity. Gandhi's agony is ours as well, after all, an inevitable by-product of the long human journey from infancy to adulthood. We all wage wars on our wants." A different approach from the western view—which is "release your passions by experiencing them".

So what is missing in this book? Obviously, Kakar couldn't have covered all events between Gandhi's and Mandakini's time. But it would be interesting to read Kakar's analysis of the popular Bombay souped-up versions of the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. Also, Kakar now and then touches on his own experiences as a youth. Most of the stories picked from literature and films deal with fulfilment of sexual desires which one knows Indians suffer from. Wasn't "frust" (pronounced froost) a commonly used slang by college kids in the '60s?

Sex always sells. Whichever way you package it. "Exploring Indian sexuality"—a runaway sales title with actress Mandakini's waterfall-soaked tits (you can't call them breasts) gracing the cover—is a well-packaged exploration with as much scholarship and glorious insight as one has come to expect from Sudhir Kakar. He has the rare ability to combine the technicalities of his work with sheer readability. Kakar is also unique in working in a field basically western, to which he brings an application totally Indian—in that it is his classical psychiatrist viewpoint applied to the most unexpected issues and areas of Indian life that creates his original thought process.

Kakar is certainly more sympathetic and understanding of Indian women and couldn't be more damning to irrational machismo than a raving feminist. His sense of balance is delightful. One wonders how Kakar functions in his own life, where his natural instinct must be to guinea-pig-ize all those around him including himself. Now, where does Kakar go once a week?

—MADHU P. TREHAN

Ribald Kitsch

Romp through Delhi's history

DELHI
by KHUSHWANT SINGH
Viking
Price: Rs 150; Pages: 391

THE book is quintessential Khushwant. Raunchy, full of the scatological (with appropriate sound effects), studded with historical facts, and just plain funny. The only trouble is: there are too many Khushwants in here and they end up spoiling the broth of words.

There's Khushwant the historian, the diarist, the novelist, the journalist, the nature lover and the irrepressible raconteur of dirty jokes. Unfortunately, his many faces do not shuffle into a homogenous piece of literature. Instead, the novel remains an impressive array of fascinating facts about Delhi and those who passed through its ancient portals during the last six centuries, strung together with a kind of romantic story about the ageing Sikh narrator and Bhagmati, his pock-marked *hijda*-lover with butterfly pins in her oily hair.

Nevertheless, the book is seldom less-than-readable in its romp through history. It is almost a *son et lumiere* (this is after all Khushwant at his onomatopoeic best) of this many-layered city. The rumbustious narrator brings to life personages who have altered its landscape—Nadir Shah, Aurangzeb Alamgir, Mir Taqi Mir, Bahadur Shah Zafar, Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.

The author has scanned the historical accounts for personal quirks and the strangest of details. For example, Nadir Shah found the watermelons of India

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"without flavour". Worse: they "produced wind in our stomachs".

But the heart of the story is the city itself. This is actually a love story about the author and the city. He says as much and he says it all in his opening lines: "I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign lands. Delhi and Bhagmati have a lot in common."

Bhagmati, the plain *hijda* is then more than an erotic embellishment. She fuses the many contrary characteristics of this madly demanding city—more sinned against than sinner. More important still, she is both Hindu and Muslim;

EXCERPT

When men came to expend their lust on *hijdas*—it is surprising how many prefer them to women—Bhagmati got more patrons than anyone else in her troupe. She could give herself as a woman; she could give herself as a boy. She also discovered that some men preferred to be treated as women. Though limited in her resources, she learnt how to give them pleasure too. There were no variations of sex that Bhagmati found unnatural or did not enjoy. Despite being the plainest of *hijdas*, she came to be sought by the old and young, the potent and impotent, by homosexuals, sadists and masochists.

and after her association with the narrator, a bit of a Sikh too.

A theme amplified in the chapter on the *kayastha*, Mussaddi Lal—who also found himself in the twilight zone between Hindu and Muslim—paralleling that grey area between man and woman the *hijda* finds herself in. "I was disowned by the Hindus...I was exploited by the Muslims...Indeed, I was like the *hijda*-...who could be misused by everyone."

Spirited the book certainly is. But there is a sad tinge throughout which comes to fruition in the graphic and moving accounts of the carnage of November 1984. No, this is not a coming-of-age novel, but a coming-out-of-illusion novel. An autumn of the patriarch, albeit a naughty one.

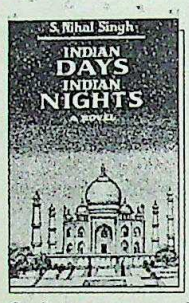
Hardly off the press, the book is in its third print run. The lurid kitsch cover with the diaphanous nymphet could be the catalyst to sales. But this is also Khushwant Singh at his salacious best with malice above all to perhaps himself.

—MADHU JAIN

Pulp Product

A disastrous fiction debut

INDIAN DAYS INDIAN NIGHTS
by S. NIHAL SINGH
Arnold Publishers
Price: Rs 75; Pages: 160



THIS is a strange book. Most genres would baulk at claiming it in their folds. The literary would dismiss it as absurdly superficial; the thriller as too unengrossing; and the romantic would find it not mushy enough. The all-embracing arms of outright pulp would reject it too. Not because of the material and treatment, but in deference to the author's eminence.

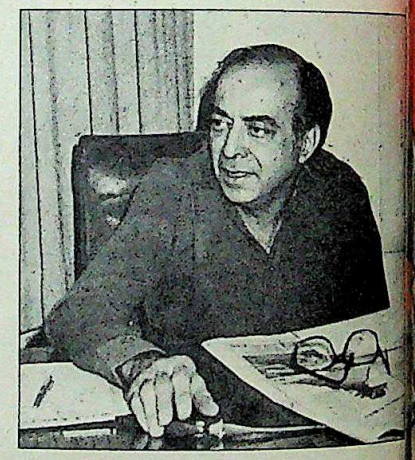
Laurits Lundquist is the Swedish ambassador in India, and diplomacy is his secondary skill. The primary is the ensnaring and rapid bedding of beautiful women. His conquests span the continents, even as they take in their virile sway the wives of his subordinates. Lundquist's embassy seems to live by his example, and is all in the throes of hedonistic indulgence. In fact, the characters of *Indian Days Indian Nights* seem to be bound to each other only by their groins.

That roughly sums up the major strand of the novel. The minor is that some of the characters also have feelings other than that of urgent desire. In between their fornications they are deeply moved by the decrepitude of the Indian peoples, and break into verbose expression of their anguish—Lundquist even producing some flaccid poetry. The minormost weave, which suddenly—apropos of nothing, as much else in the book—puts in an appearance towards the end is that given time India both breeds a contentment and absorbs. There is no time to expand on this, for the book then ends.

So much for the themes; now the characters. They—both Indian and Swedish—are either doing it or having it done to them. They are Scotch-and-soda swillers, rabid party animals, happily adulterous, and cut from brittle cardboard. They tumble through the book in a haze of names, appearing and disappearing with a glorious unconcern for any larger aims of the narrative. At book-end, one is sure everyone—including the inevitable swami in an ashram—has had a piece of the action, but the only two who suffer recall are Lundquist and his illicit lover Greta, and that partly because they grace the last page.

So much for the characters; now for the plot. Only there isn't any. *Indian Days Indian Nights* is the story of Lundquist's journey from wantonness to love. But it could have been accomplished in the space of a page for all the enlightenment it provides of the transition. Local colour comes in the form of the Taj Mahal and the Meenakshi temple at Madurai; and local flavour through conversational exchanges on the quaintness of India. Fixing the novel in time, and providing it a political vein are references to Nehru, Krishna Menon and G.B. Pant.

The last straw is the indifferent writing. Here is no evidence of the craft of



Nihal Singh: disappointing effort

good fiction. The author' syntax may be unassailable, but cliches, homilies, inanities, and frayed phrases abound. Sentences have a desultory repititiousness: "Lundquist liked her fighting spirit. She was no drooping lily. Quite the contrary. She was willing to accept a challenge at the drop of a hat."

Stranger than the novel is the fact that S. Nihal Singh should have written it. The book seems neither driven by the autobiographical instinct, nor by the need to exorcise some personal demons. And if it's either, then maybe it succeeds as that; but as a work of fiction it certainly does not. India can scarcely boast an illustrious lineage of top newspaper editors who have also been first-rate literary writers and poets. S. Nihal Singh will not disturb the record—at least not with this effort. What he will do is severely disappoint the many admirers of his distinguished journalism.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

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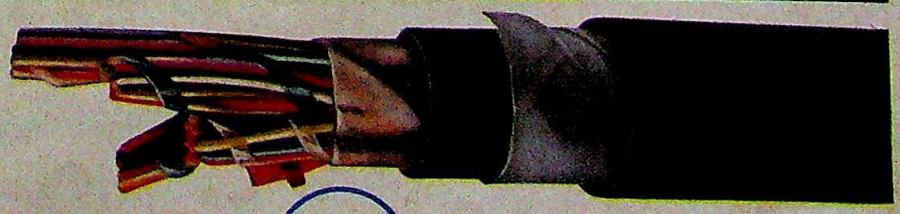

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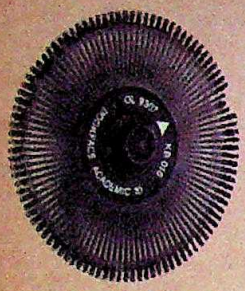
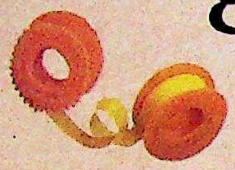
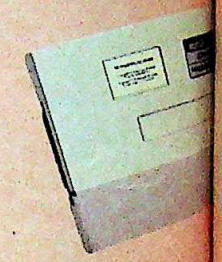


The secret of growing up without growing old.





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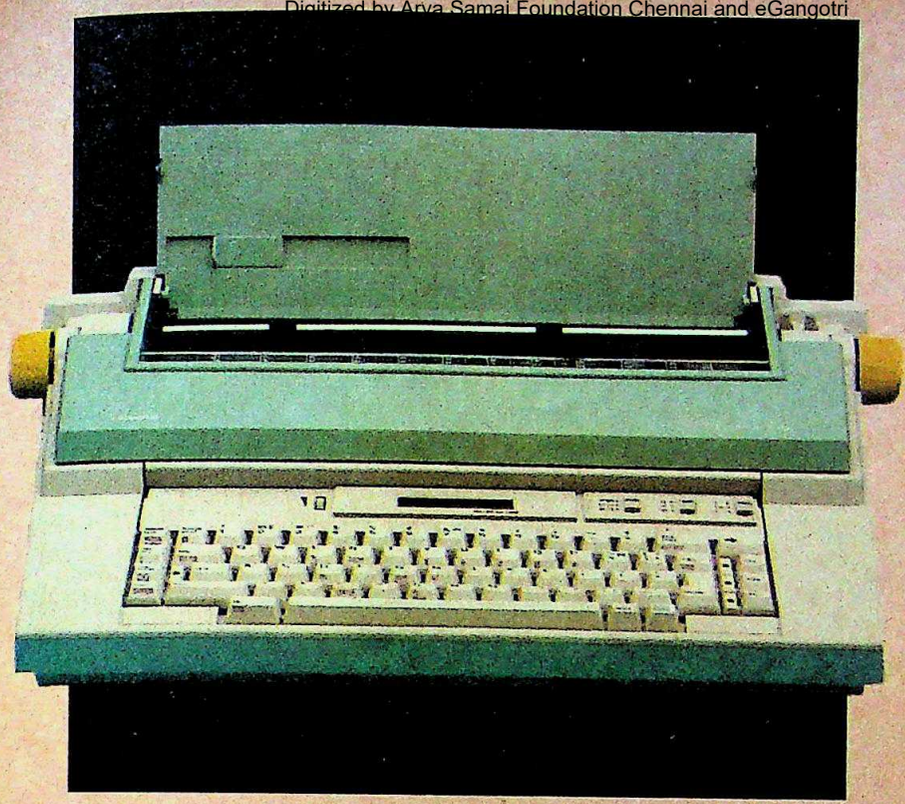

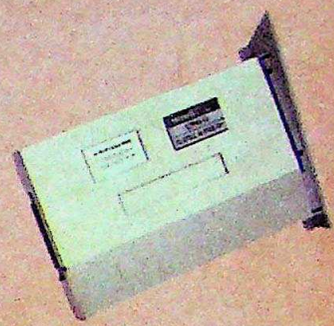

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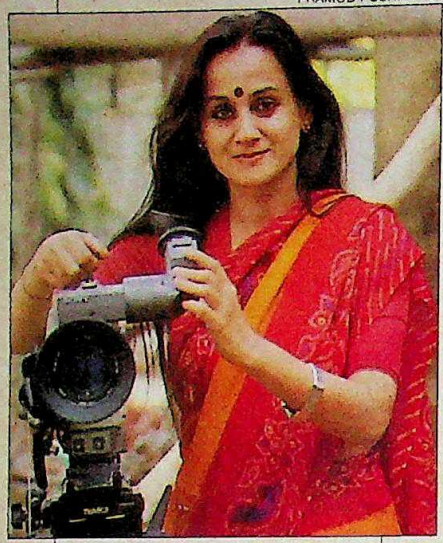
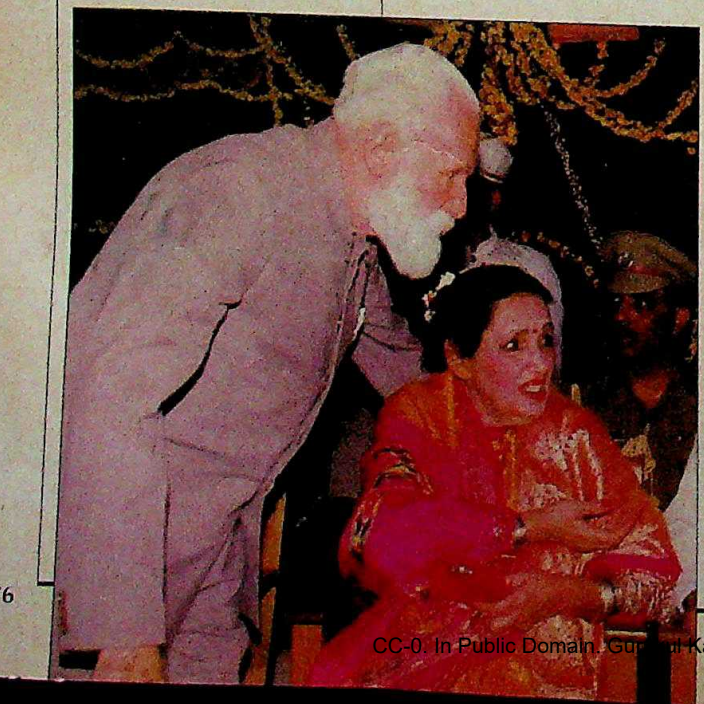


Nalini: delaying the encore

◆ She's another crusader from the Shourie stable. But not for her the prosaic medium of print. After stunning the nation with her documentary on booth-capturing, **Nalini Singh**, took her sharp-shooting cameras to the killing fields of Bhagalpur. But because of the situation in Kashmir, good old Doordarshan has decided to not telecast it. And she acquiesced, saying: "I'd have done the same." Well, she's tailored her next venture in a trouble-free cut—no politics, no religion. It's titled: *Middle Age Begins at 80.*

◆ Her links to the Soviet Union are not recent. But **Devika Rani**—married to Soviet painter Svetoslav Roerich—found the ties had strengthened last fortnight when she received the Soviet Land Nehru Award.

The one time prima donna of the Indian silver screen describes Mikhail Gorbachev as the "Man of the Century". *Time* magazine had stopped at calling him "The Man of the Decade". But the lady is no starry eyed, distant admirer—she's a close friend of the Soviet President.



Devika Rani: 'Gorby' fan

◆ She couldn't have been better named. Sweet 16 and with grandpa Raj Kapoor's blue eyes, **Karishma** exudes mystery. Whether Randhir Kapoor's daughter can live up to her name on screen can be seen soon. Her first film, produced by Dharmendra is directed by Shekhar Kapur. Her co-debutant: Dharmendra's second son Bobby Deol. The Sophia College arts student feels that but for this break she might have ended up in a finishing school in Switzerland "learning how to place my fork and spoon correctly".

Karishma: star genes

◆ Who was that man? While Ravi Shankar's sitar enthralled the audience at the Indian Music Group's annual festival at Bombay's St Xavier's College, some began wondering who the familiar-looking man accompanying him was. It was none other than **Shubho Shankar**, in his 40s, the maestro's son by first wife Anapoorna Devi. Father was pulling strings for son for the big concert stage. "We are very hopeful about Shubho. He has a bright future." Shubho, who lives in California and accompanied his father for the first time in the South Asian tour last month, is thrilled about playing with the maestro. "It's the best training I can get." Music's in his genes: his maternal grandfather was the legendary Ustad Allaudin Khan.

The Shankars: in tandem

Khan: jinxed

◆ Baptism through fi didn't help. **Sanjay Khan** manage to recover from fire debacle to continue serial based on the book, *Sword of Tipu Sultan*. It was be aired on February 10. B the Sultan's sword might st sheathed, as the BJP says Tipu portrayal is glorified—actua he was anti-Hindu. Khan, course, calls it "a beautiful document on commun harmony" and asks: "Wh didn't they object when t book came out in 1976?"

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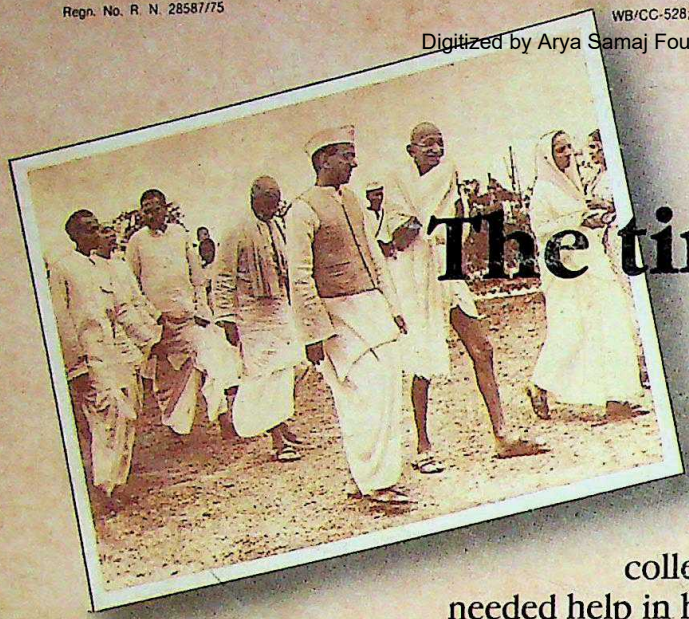


The times of transition

The call for individual satyagraha brought thunder to the freedom movement. The Briti were besieged by World War II on one side and the call to "Quit India" on the other.

In 1938, Kamalnayan Bajaj had returned to India on vacation from his college in England. Seeing his father Jamnalal needed help in his public work and that the family business had been neglected for the freedom movement, he decided to stay on in India and complete his studies later. This was not to be.

The rapid political developments in the country consumed his time and energies. Then came the stunning blow. Jamnalal Bajaj passed away suddenly in February 1942.

Barely 27, Kamalnayan Bajaj had to assume crucial responsibilities, on the political front, in his father's business and in heading the family.

But he was a child of the freedom struggle. Born in 1915, the year that the association of Mahatma Gandhi began with the Bajaj family, he was brought up under the care of three giants of his time; Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and his father, Jamnalal.

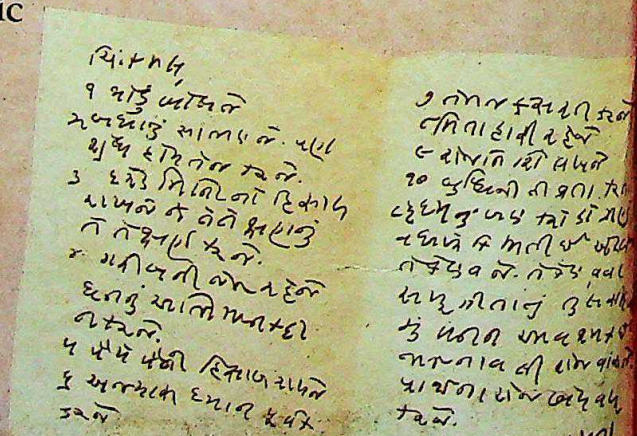
This helped him imbibe the unusual values, spiritual discipline and work ethic he was to display in later life.

From his childhood he had lived in a family which was at the epicentre of the freedom struggle. Kamalnayan's initiation to politics had come when he was just fifteen. He was one of the youngest volunteers for the historic Dandi March in 1930. Two years later he was imprisoned, and also had to endure solitary confinement.

Living in close contact with all the leaders of that momentous era, Kamalnayan had been well prepared for the difficult years ahead.

He was to play a significant role in public life as a leader of the All-India States People's Conference, a Congressman, Member of Parliament and as a social and business leader.

Kamalnayan would also soon lead a drive for diversification in the Bajaj Group. New industries important to India's development would be entered. The Bajaj Group would attain an international reputation for integrity, foresight and a commitment to the family belief that their wealth and shareholders' funds was money held in trust, to be used for creating national wealth and promoting the common good.



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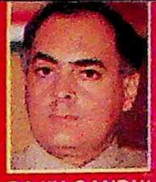

RAJIV GANDHI

STATE ELECTIONS: BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

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PAKISTAN ON THE SPOT REPORT

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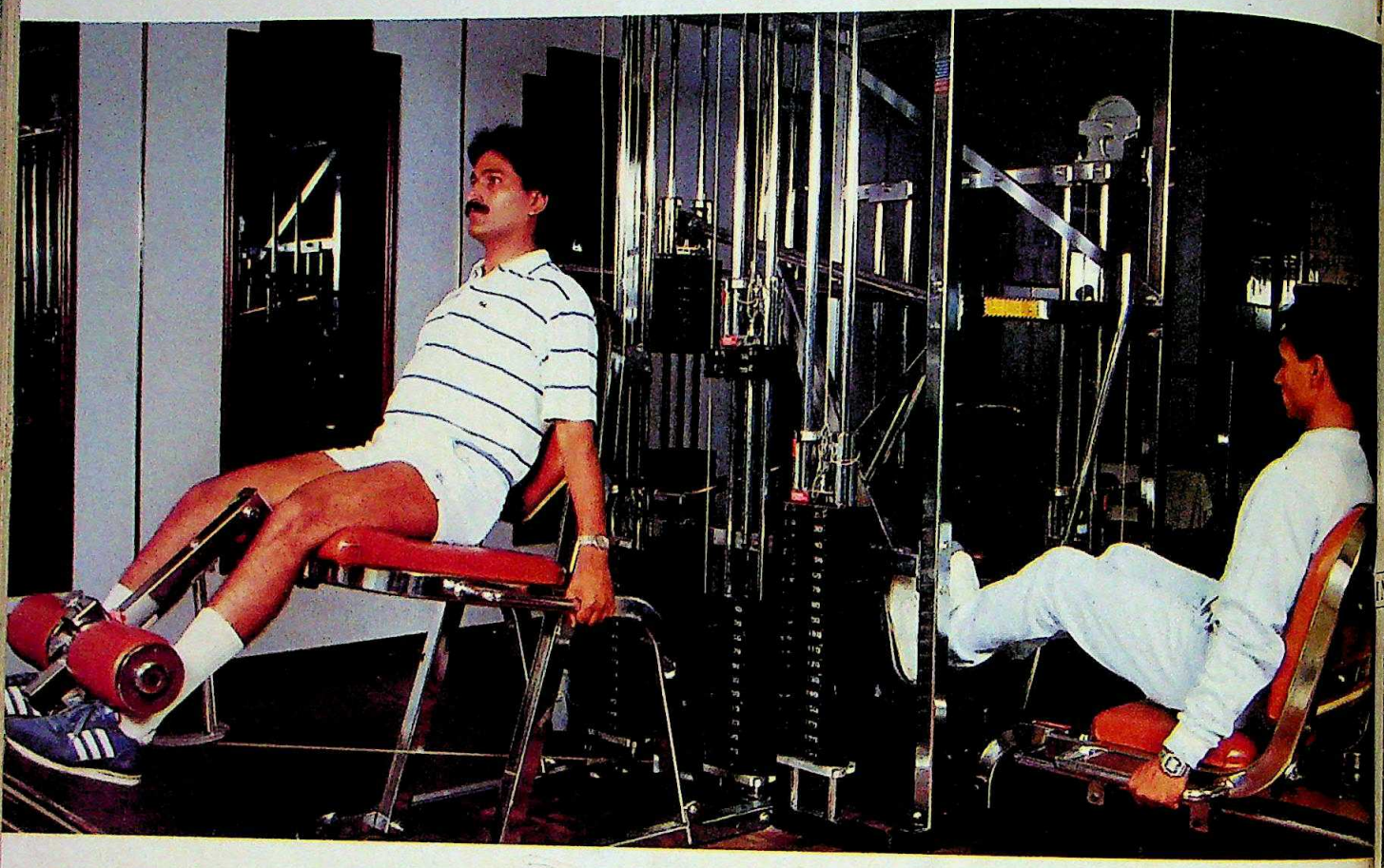

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

COINCIDENCE marks the workings of destiny. Journalist Prabha Dutt, 40, joined INDIA TODAY in January 1984, but tragically died suddenly less than two months later of a brain haemorrhage. Her stint was short, but it was not without impact. The outspoken reporter, known in her 20-year career for integrity and courage, had begun to carve a niche for herself in the magazine.

As a tribute to Dutt, her many friends—including Khushwant Singh and B.G. Verghese—formed the Prabha Dutt Memorial Foundation. And Media India, a quarterly magazine, instituted an award to be given annually to a woman journalist for investigative reporting. It was to reflect the impressive strides taken by women in Indian journalism.

Thus we experienced a special satisfaction when one of our Delhi-based reporters, Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA, 28, won the Prabha Dutt Award for investigative reporting, last fortnight.

Harinder Baweja

The award is a recognition of her reporting in Punjab and Haryana, specifically, for her story on how children orphaned by terrorism in Punjab are trying to reconstruct their lives (INDIA TODAY, November 15, 1989).

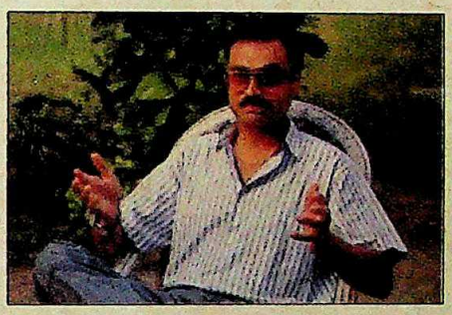
The story triggered off an avalanche of enquiries, with people seeking information on how they should go about rehabilitating orphans. For Baweja, who joined us some six months back, it proved a great morale booster. The award has deepened her desire to do many more such stories. Says she: "I was really moved when Prabha Dutt's husband presented me the scroll of honour, the memento and the medal." For us at INDIA TODAY, it was a moment of both rejoicing and reminiscence.

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

War Games

With the Kashmir issue hotting up, an armed conflict between India and Pakistan, though currently a remote possibility, cannot be entirely ruled out. An analysis of the relative military strengths of the two countries and possible war scenarios. Plus an on-the-spot report on the situation in Pakistan.

COVER STORY 22



Calling to Account

Six months after the St Kitts scandal broke, the new Government has come up with shocking revelations: that top bureaucrats, Congress(I) leaders including P.V. Narasimha Rao, godman Chandraswamy and foreign nationals had participated in the operation to discredit V.P. Singh.

SPECIAL REPORT 34

Crucial Contest

The February 27 assembly elections, though not as dramatic as the Lok Sabha polls, are nothing but a mini general election. At stake are not just the individual fortunes of both Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi, but also the direction of the nation's politics for the first half of this decade.

ELECTION SPECIAL 42

Heady Heights

The recent award of the Rs 3,000-crore Haldia project to Tata Tea thrust the Tata group to the pinnacle of the big league. Other group companies like Tata Steel, TELCO, Tata Oil Mills and Indian Hotels too are expanding rapidly. But with several fiefdoms emerging, there are doubts about the group's coherence.

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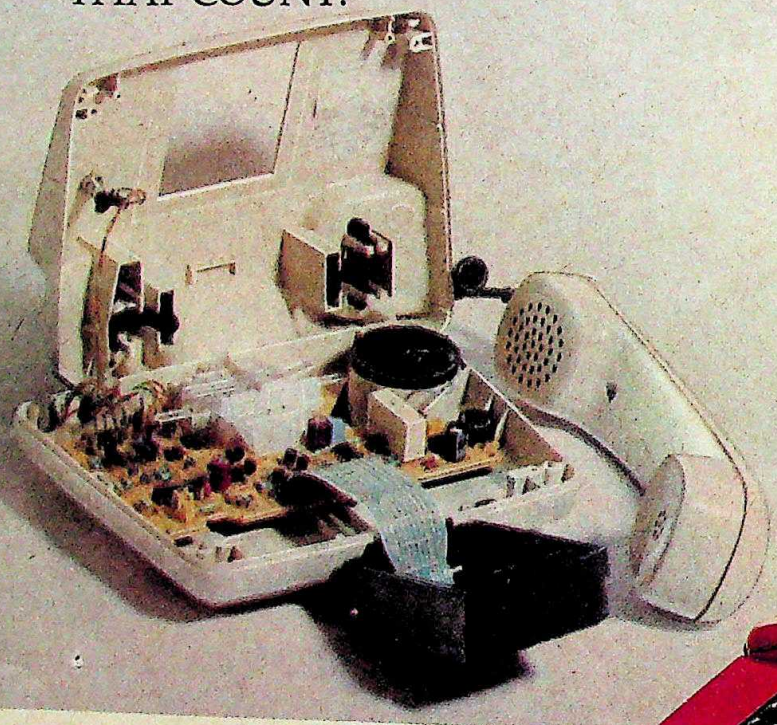

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MORE ROOM FOR REFORMS

Your cover story ("Pangs of Change", February 15) has touched the core of the problem in the Soviet Union. While introducing *glasnost* and *perestroika*, President Mikhail Gorbachev should also have offered a multi-party system which would have acted as a safety valve for growing regional aspirations.

Agra — ANIL KUMAR DIKSHIT

TURMOIL IN THE VALLEY

The cover story ("Militant Siege", January 31) makes it clear that there is an urgent need to establish the rule of law in the Kashmir Valley. While the state administration should address itself to the genuine grievances of the people, at the same time, it should root out secessionists with an iron hand.

Srirangam — L. NARASIMHAMURTHY

■ The Government should not have chosen the path of ruthless repression which has claimed many lives and alienated the people of Kashmir more than ever before.

Srinagar — A.K. SETHI

■ The biggest challenge before the National Front Government is to find a solution to the Kashmir problem.

Solapur — VIJENDRA S. MANVI

■ The present unrest in the valley is the creation of unscrupulous politicians.

Madras — TAJAMUL HUSSAIN

■ Former chief minister Farooq Abdullah deserves both "onions and lashes" for his incompetence in handling the law and order situation in the valley.

Vijayawada — D. SRINIVASA RAO

■ The Government should initiate steps to disarm the militants and check the infiltration of insurgents trained in Pakistan. A conducive atmosphere should be created to win back the confidence of the people.

Bangalore — T.R.N. SHARMA

■ With the law and order machinery in Kashmir having gone haywire, a war of attrition is on. The brutal killings of intelligence sleuths have raised the question of reorganisation of the intelligence set-up in Kashmir.

Bhopal — RAMESH NARAYANAN

■ The Kashmir crisis is burgeoning to perilous proportions. The people have been engulfed in danger and insecurity. The Centre should expeditiously negotiate a settlement before the volcano of hatred erupts.

Bangalore — K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

■ Mere administrative changes can no longer retrieve the situation in Kashmir. What is required is the waiving of the restriction on the settlement of non-Kashmiri Indians in the state under Article 370.

Delhi — D.N. DHAR

■ The present situation in Kashmir is a consequence of the complacent attitude of those who were in power earlier. The capability, or rather incapability, of the Muslim polity to coexist with other religious groups in a country is also a point to ponder over.

Hyderabad — P.R. KULKARNI

■ It is unfortunate that even after four decades of democratic rule, the people of the valley have not been brought into the national mainstream.

Sonepat — K. GOPAKUMAR MENON

■ What the people of Kashmir need today is the healing touch instead of a pitched battle against them.

Chandigarh — DHIRAJ CHHIBBAR

■ Our pro-Islamic, democratic secular policy is responsible for the unfortunate situation in Kashmir today.

Hyderabad — PRAMOD VALSANGKAR

■ Though your report makes a fair portrayal of the situation in the valley, it ends on a disappointing note. To say that Kashmir acceded to India is not fair on your part. How could India have then taken the dispute to the UN, which asked for a plebiscite? And even if it is granted that Kashmir acceded to India, can the right to secede be denied? Didn't India help Bangladesh achieve precisely that in 1971? But perhaps the free press in India is not free enough to say that.

New Delhi — MIR GHULAM AFZAL

PROMISES TO KEEP

The present Government has been voted to power on the basis of the promises made during the elections ("Perils of Vagueness", January 31). And if it fails to fulfil them, the people will vote it out in the next elections.

New Delhi — J. RAMNATH

■ To implement its agenda in a non-partisan manner, the V.P. Singh Government should seek the co-operation of voluntary agencies operating at the grassroots level.

Chandigarh — M.S. KALSI

SINCERE APPROACH

The decision of the Government ("Turning the Screws", January 31) to launch criminal proceedings against those suspected to be involved in the Bofors gun deal kickbacks and cover-up is indicative of its sincerity of approach and determination.

Gorakhpur — JAIDEEP MITTRA

A HEALING TOUCH

The Ludhiana rally ("Seeking Solutions", January 31) was a much-needed move on the part of the Government to bring peace and amity in the strife-torn Punjab. It is, however, regrettable that the Congress(I), which repeatedly assured the Government of its co-operation, did not participate in it.

Madras — C.P. SRIRAM

■ The holding of the Ludhiana rally and Prime Minister V.P. Singh's visit to Amritsar cannot be seen as a major breakthrough in solving the vexed Punjab problem. Nonetheless, these initiatives have created an atmosphere of

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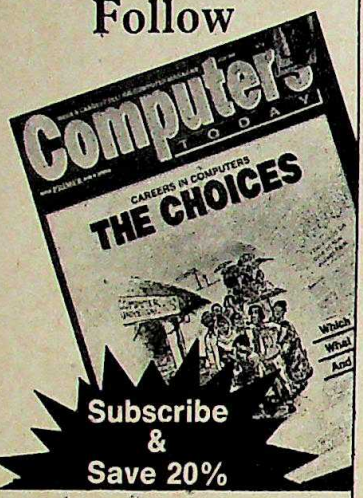

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New Delhi — SHAILENDRA KUMAR

WELCOME MOVE

The prime minister's announcement that action would be taken against those found guilty of involvement in the anti-Sikh carnage in 1984 is commendable ("Time for Trial", January 31). The success of this move will prove how committed V.P. Singh's Government is towards ensuring that justice is not denied, though it has been delayed.

Charari-Sharief, Kashmir — GH. NABI BABA

■ The National Front Government would do well to identify and punish the culprits involved in the mass murder of Sikhs that took place soon after Mrs Gandhi's assassination.

Bangalore — G. CHANDRASEKAR

NO ENTERTAINMENT

In "Breaking into Politics" (November 30), you have said that I have been campaigning from the South Madras constituency in "the way he knows best" by entertaining industrialists and businessmen in Taj Coramandel and Connemara hotels to lunches and dinners. There is no truth in the allegation made. I have not even had a private lunch or dinner at either of these hotels during this period.

Madras — A.P. VENKATESWARAN

■ *The error is regretted.*

—Editor

UNFAIR COMPARISON

It seems unfair to compare the Mahabharata and Ramayana since they are two distinct epics, each deserving equal respect ("Echoing the Past", January 31). The statement that Draupadi is better than Sita is unsubstantiated.

New Delhi — A. RAVINDRA

■ B.R.Chopra's version of the Mahabharata is but a *nautanki* which has fired the imagination of the people. The theme of contemporaneity, which has been imposed on the serial, is contrived and unconvincing. It is merely a myopic appraisal of the original text.

Meerut — VIKAS PANCHSHEEL

■ Though the makers of *Mahabharat* have slightly deviated from the original text, they certainly haven't distorted the story. Some modification is inevitable as film-making is a creative art.

Bhubaneswar — D.J. PATRO

AN ILLOGICAL BUNCH

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has been changing cricket captains ("Board's Googly", January 31) like the Government changes chief ministers and governors. If at all, it is now time to change the entire set-up of the selection committee—particularly after the recent performance of the team in New Zealand.

Kurnool — P. SIVARAM PRASAD

■ The competency of the board members in selecting Test players is questionable since most of them have never played a single Test match themselves. Instead of conducting a dialogue with the Players' Association, they have vindictively 'punished' the players who dared to air their grievances against them.

Guwahati — SUBRATA BOSE

■ Raj Singh Dungarpur's irrational justification for excluding Dilip Vengsarkar and K. Srikkanth from the team is an indicator of the petty vindictiveness of the selection committee. He has callously ignored merit, making one wonder whether he is worthy of being retained as the chairman of the committee. Perhaps, he and the other board members should be removed to prevent the catastrophic collapse of the team.

Allahabad — R.K. SRIVASTAVA

■ Now that the zamindari of some senior players has been cut to size, it is time to abolish the *numberdari* of men like Raj Singh Dungarpur over the selectors' 'panchayat'. In fact, the exclusion of Dilip Vengsarkar only confirms Mohinder Amarnath's view that the selectors are a "bunch of jokers".

Calcutta — HEMA SHARMA

■ Whatever justification the selectors may have for their decision to axe six experienced cricketers, the illogical and arbitrary step will be suicidal for the Indian team. While the inclusion of young blood in the team is justifiable, there should be a perfect blend of youth and experience.

Meerut Cantt — SHASHANK SHEKHAR

■ The board did well to stump some of the cricketers. This was the only way of dealing with the growing indiscipline in the team, particularly after the players' boycott threat. Srikkanth's irresponsible batting in Pakistan shows the need for the infusion of young blood in the team. Dungarpur should, in fact, be congratulated rather than condemned.

Ranchi — BISWAJIT DAS

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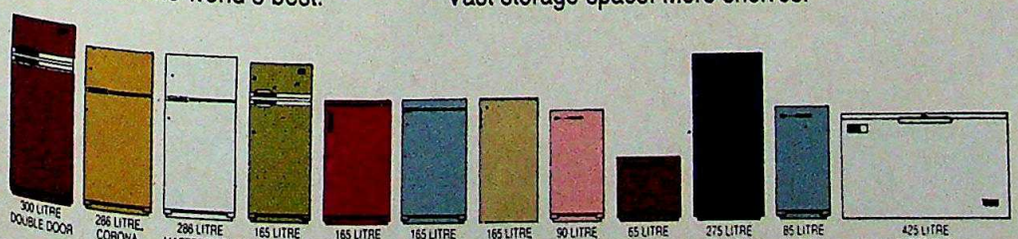

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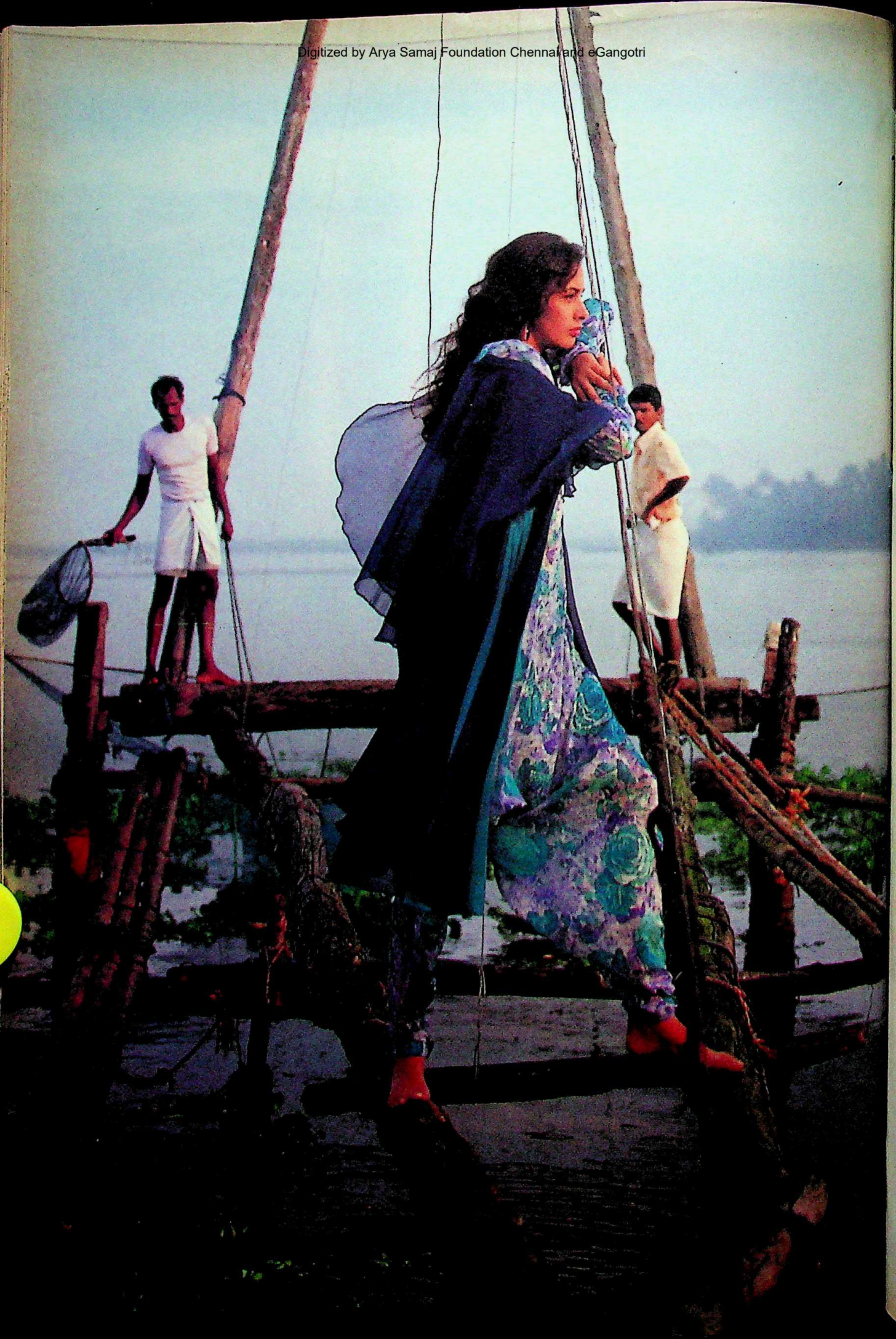

You are nightwind. You are birdsong. It's your way to be. You fascinate me.

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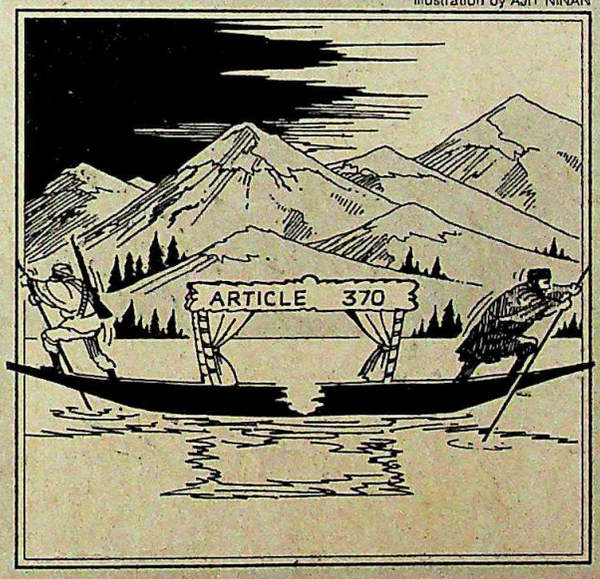
An Article of Faith

IN the heated discussions that now rage on the Kashmir problem, even the most intelligent debaters denounce Article 370 of the Indian Constitution as one of the major causes of trouble between the valley and the rest of the nation. Article 370 has also been the traditional ideological bugbear of the Bharatiya Janata Party. It has become the symbol of appeasement, of a political and constitutional retreat that appears to have conferred a special, most-favoured-people status on the Muslims of Kashmir. Scrap it, they argue, and half the problem is over.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Abolishing Article 370, even if that were practical, is fraught with dangerous legal complications for India and would be tantamount to internationalising the Kashmir controversy. If it indeed was a concession, even a mistaken one, it was made in the absence of other clear-cut choices by the founding fathers of this country. Consider, briefly, the historical compulsions behind Article 370.

First, contrary to the communal colouration it has now acquired, the article had its roots not in Muslim demands but in demands by the Pandit Sabha and the Dogra Sabha—Kashmir's land-owning classes—who were opposed to a British policy, starting in 1893, of ushering Punjabi Muslims as zamindars, jagirdars, and government officers into the valley. Afraid of the potential competition, the Dogras and Pandits prevailed upon the maharaja in the late '20s to issue the first State Subjects Notification under which those who were not subjects of the state could not buy land in Kashmir.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



Kashmir's relationship with India—even after Maharaja Hari Singh, under the advice of Sheikh Abdullah, signed the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union following the 1947 invasion by Pakistani raiders—remained significantly different from that of other former princely states. Signing the Instrument of Accession meant that these states on their own volition, as spelled out in the Independence Act, had surrendered only defence, foreign policy, currency and communications to the emerging nation. By 1949, however, thanks to efforts by Vallabhbhai Patel, accession was converted into total merger. Except for Kashmir.

In the case of Kashmir, partly because Nehru had, preceding the cease-fire with Pakistan, pledged a plebiscite in the United Nations, and partly because Kashmir fell under the category of states in which a majority community was ruled by a minority ruler, the Instrument of Accession specified that the state could have its constitution; that the State Subjects law would continue; and that after full normalcy was restored in the state the wishes of the people would be asserted.

Even as India was framing its own constitution, Kashmir's own Constituent Assembly was hammering out a separate Kashmiri constitution. India's Constituent Assembly finished its work in 1950, Kashmir's in 1955. During this period, a delicate balance was struck between the Union of India and Kashmir. The Indian Constituent Assembly, in which Kashmir was also represented in 1949, faced a perplexing dilemma. India had made an international pledge to hold a plebiscite, but was yet determined to preserve the link with Kashmir as embodied by the Instrument of Accession.

THE founding fathers believed that the Instrument was a treaty and should be replaced by some constitutional arrangement through which Kashmir would continue to be a part of India and yet be given the freedom to choose between total merger and plebiscite.

This was the beginning of Article 370. Sheikh Abdullah, whose aim had been an independent Kashmir but who had supported accession to thwart Pakistani pressure, vehemently opposed it. Article 370 stipulates that Jammu and Kashmir is a part of India; that the Indian Parliament can make laws on all Central issues applicable to Kashmir without the consent of the people of Kashmir; and most important, that the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir—in session until 1955—would have the final say on whether Article 370 would continue, be amended or scrapped.

In other words, the Indian Parliament, even if it wished to amend Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, cannot do so without the concurrence of Kashmir's Constituent Assembly. In fact, one of the reasons Sheikh Abdullah was arrested and jailed in 1953 was that the Indian Government discovered he was secretly trying to canvass the state's Constituent Assembly to oppose ratification of Article 370. In August 1954 Kashmir's Constituent Assembly approved the article, one of its last acts prior to its dissolution.

Today, Article 370 is the only arena through which the laws of the Indian Union apply to Kashmir. It is the legal window through which Indian governance is extended to the state. Technically, it cannot be scrapped because there is no way in which a dissolved state constituent assembly can be resurrected. If by some technical machination this could be done and the article were scrapped, Kashmir would legally revert to the Instrument of Accession under which it can demand a plebiscite and give real cause for Kashmiris to internationalise the issue and demand independence.

Strange are the ways of politics. Those who want greater autonomy and spout anti-Indian rhetoric in Kashmir insist that Article 370 should remain inviolable. And those who want to curb separatism in the state demand that Article 370—the most effective legal adhesive binding Kashmir to India—be jettisoned. If only politicians would read history!

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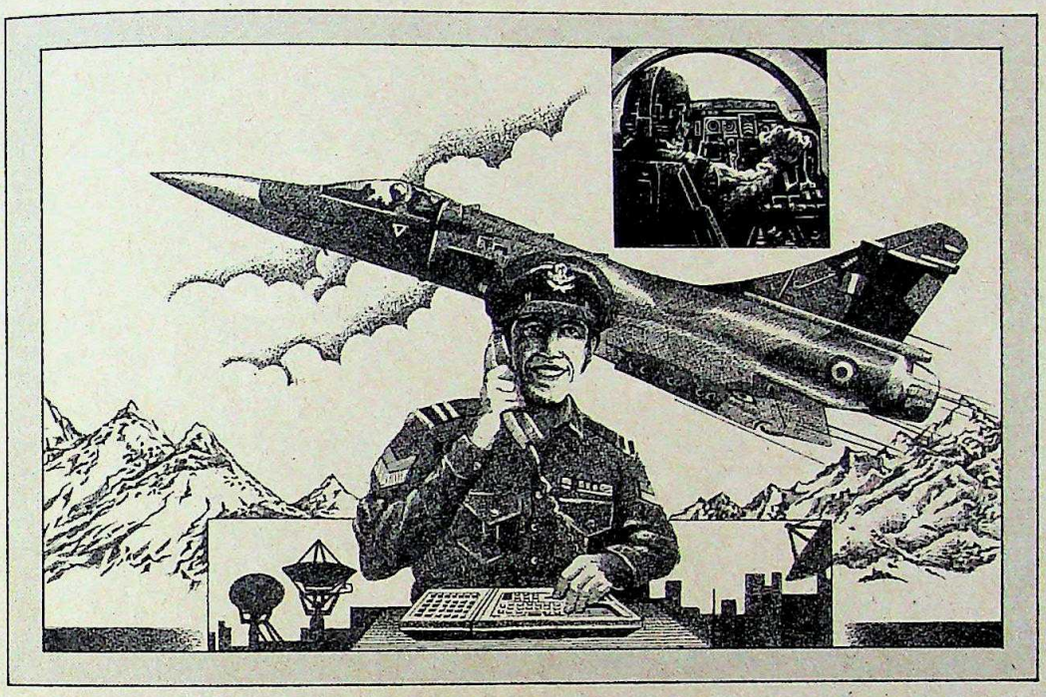

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Disbanding Perks

● The controversy over the disbanding of the 750-member Special Protection Group (SPG), specially created for the security of the prime minister, is not confined to whether Rajiv Gandhi needs them more than V.P. Singh or even whether they are required at all. The major source of pressure

for its continuance comes from within the organisation itself.

Expectedly, the strenuous lobbying going on by senior SPG personnel is mainly because of the financial and other benefits that the officers and men stand to lose if the organisation is disbanded. SPG personnel were inducted at salaries and allowances which were around 50 per cent higher than what they were getting in the police or paramilitary forces. They were also entitled to cars and uniform allowances apart from the regular travel abroad and in India. Not surprisingly, most SPG personnel are reluctant to give up such perks and have been lobbying the powers that be to retain their services and separate identity. Since many were inducted into the SPG from the police at the behest of influential relatives, mainly Congress(I) leaders and senior bureaucrats, their voice carries some weight. Even though Prime Minister V.P. Singh is adamant about disbanding the SPG, the lobbying is still going on in the hope of a last-minute reprieve.

Remote Control

● Big brother is still watching—and controlling. The National Front Government's public pronouncements on complete autonomy for Doordarshan and All India Radio certainly do not appear to match its actions.

The latest example of this inconsistency is the Government's instructions to Doordarshan on the treatment of reports on the recent violence between two ethnic communities in the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.

Doordarshan had managed to acquire considerable footage of the action in the Soviet border state. But the bosses in the organisation were clearly told to limit the visual footage on the newscasts to the barest minimum possible.

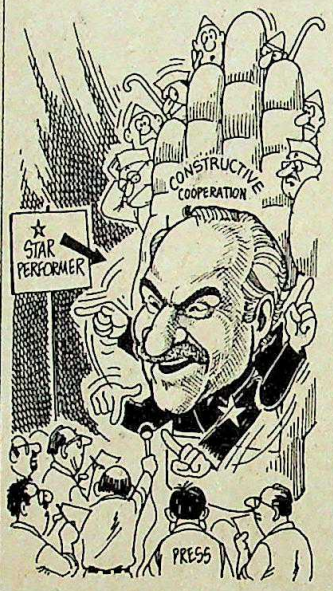
In other words: read the

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

news, don't show it. The reason? Scenes of the ethnic population challenging the might of the Soviet empire were likely to provide provocation for the militants in Jammu and Kashmir to indulge in similar acts of violence here. Crying Freedom is obviously a lot easier than implementing it.

Rising Star

● With metronomic regularity, stars rise on the Congress(I) firmament before courting oblivion. The latest *neta* on the ascendant is former *Telegraph* editor M.J. Akbar who is on the other side of the fence—issuing press releases rather than receiving them. Accompanied by party



general secretaries K.N. Singh and V.N. Gadgil—who sit in silent splendour—Akbar is addressing press conferences. He is not only commenting on what appears in the papers, but in his overzealousness to attack the Government is responding to agency copy, still coming over the ticker. Nor is he considering it beneath him to pronounce on minor matters—he announced that Rajiv Gandhi had handed over to the Government all the cars and gifts he received as prime minister.

Worse, many of Akbar's assertions are being denied. His allegations that Jagmohan was appointed J&K governor at RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras' behest, and that Devi Lal had asked Christians who felt deprived in India to go off to New York, are pointed out as fabrications. But Akbar remains unfazed—even by the resentment he is causing among senior Congress(I) leaders. But he seems to enjoy the complete confidence of Rajiv. However, Rajiv's ways are known to be fickle. Remember Anand Sharma, the last star who dipped into the horizon.

Epic Problem

● The tele-epic *Mahabharat* has scored some important points with its obvious political overtones and innuendoes. But now it is creating real problems for politicians, including those belonging to the ruling party.

Bogged down in fierce bargaining with tight-fisted Bharatiya Janata Party leaders for seats in the coming assembly election, the Madhya Pradesh Janata Dal President V.C. Shukla wanted to impress the party's electoral allies with the popularity of Prime Minister V.P. Singh.

He, therefore, hurriedly organised a public rally in Bhopal city last fortnight in which Singh was scheduled to participate.

Only after the programme had been fixed did it occur to Shukla that the arrival of the

prime minister in the city would coincide with the telecast of *Mahabharat*. "I don't want the prime minister to see empty streets," a worried Shukla reportedly told a party colleague.

The harried leader then had to ask the prime minister to delay his arrival to get over the epic problem.

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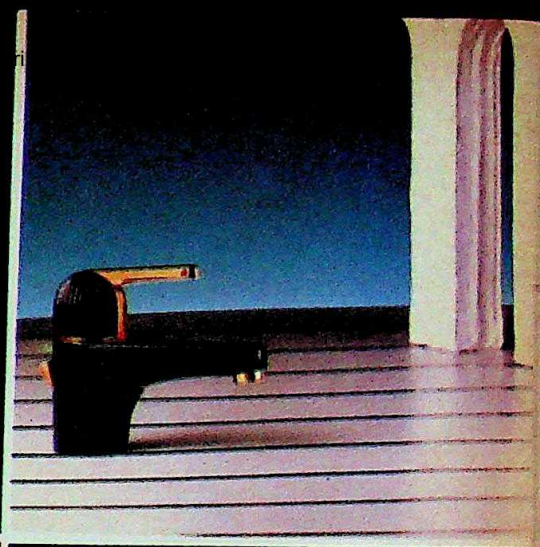

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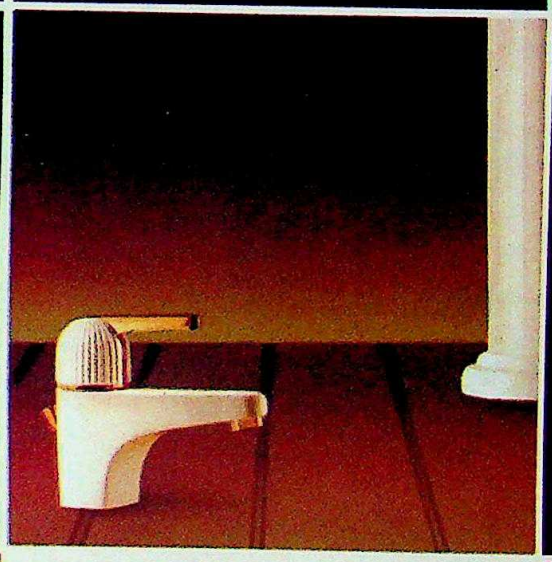

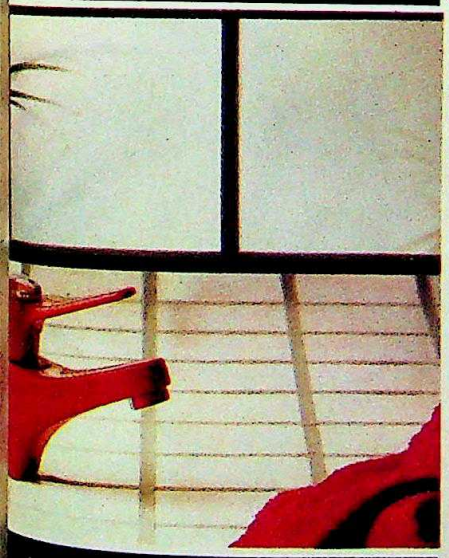

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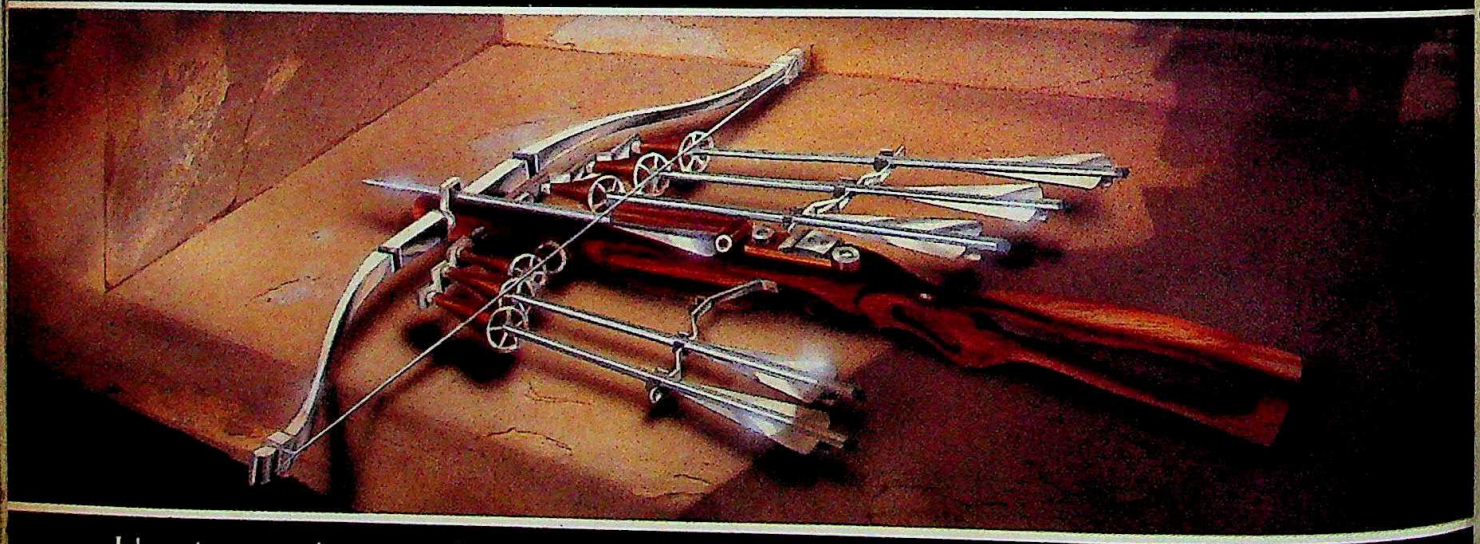
How to murder a Honda.



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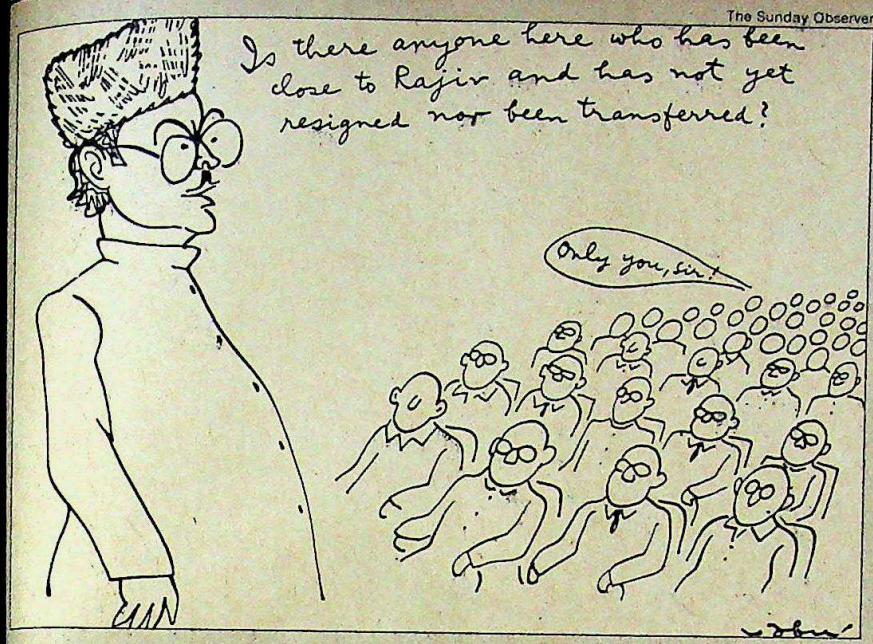

• *A gentleman who champions the cause of Kashmir in one breath and spews foul invectives against the leader of the other party in the next is being hollow and hypocritical.* ■ *The Pakistan Times* editorial criticising SAHIBZADA YAKUB KHAN

• *I hate the word 'war'. I don't want to talk about it either.*
■ INDER KUMAR GUJRAL in *Khaleej Times*

• *I have enough faith in Indian democracy to believe that no prime minister will stoop so low as to wilfully slander a private citizen solely for petty political gains.*
■ AMITABH BACHCHAN in a letter to Prime Minister V.P. SINGH

• *We are not communalists but patriotic nationalists.*
■ L.K. ADVANI in *Sunday*

• *The big dictators have left, how long can the little monarch stay?*
■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR, referring to the king of Nepal, in *The Telegraph*

• *The standard of English has declined terribly these days. I believe it is only the Indians and the Irish who can speak it.*
■ DAVID HOFFMAN, British broadcaster, in *Bombay*

• *It's so odd—and unbelievable—to see my face on the TV screen.*
■ MANEKA GANDHI in *Asiaweek*

• *Culturally and socially, Bengal has reverted to an old, barbaric traditionalism where endurance of the oppressed is the only assertion of heroism.*
■ NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI in *The Sunday Statesman Miscellany*

• *If, and at all, there was a selection committee appointed by the Government (as he has suggested), Sunil Gavaskar wouldn't have been picked up by Vijay Merchant totally raw, as he was, when he went to the West Indies in 1970-71.*
■ RAJ SINGH DUNGARPUR in *Sportsworld*

• *Indian cricket is at a critical juncture where everyone's cricketing capabilities are suspect.*
■ KAPIL DEV in *Sportsworld*

• *I'm aiming for immortality.* ■ MADHURI DIXIT in *Newstrack*

• *I needed a wife who could handle me properly. Dimple couldn't do it, she was a kid.*
■ RAJESH KHANNA in *Stardust*

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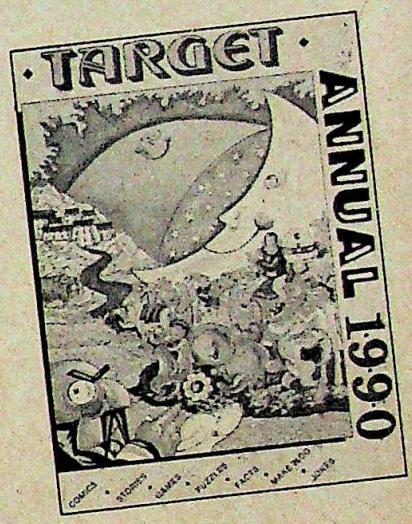

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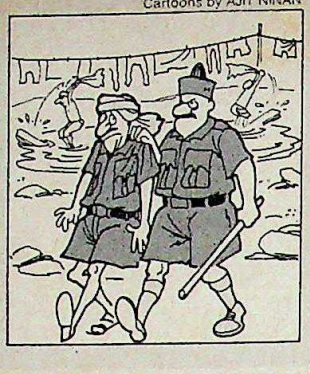
WASHED OUT

● It's okay to wash your dirty linen in public, but you shouldn't hang it out for the world to see. Particularly if you go by the case of this *dhobi* in Gwalior.

Not content with merely washing a pile of dirty linen, he decided to go a step further and wear some of these



clothes before returning them to their rightful owners. Things were all hunky dory so long as he went gallivanting around town in a borrowed pair of trousers or a dhoti. But when he slipped into a policeman's uniform there was trouble ahead.

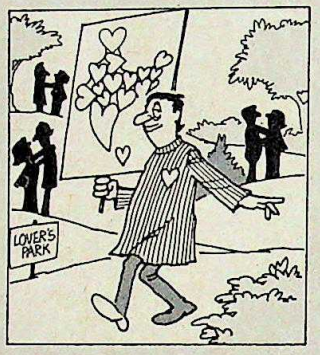
Getting vicarious pleasure from his impersonation of a policeman he began snapping orders and got people cracking like he'd never dreamt possible. Until he came face to face with the uniform's owner. The *dhobi* tried in vain to wash his hands off the whole episode. But the confident swagger and bravado soon disappeared, giving way to a sheepish grin. Behind bars, of course.

LOVE PARKS

● Though he was never born, never died and only visited the planet, Osho seems to have come back for a visit pretty soon after leaving his tortuous body. This time he's lodged himself in the body of a Yuva Janata Dal leader.

In fact, even Rajneesh seems to pale into insignificance compared to him. With the prime minister seated beside him and squirming in his seat, this new messiah of free love demanded that if the Government was unable to provide bread and employment, it might as well provide "love parks"—safe sanctuaries for love-making—for the youth.

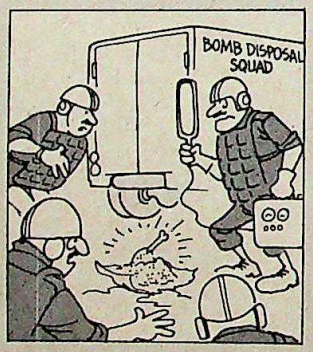
But he claims his is no frivolous suggestion and



even offers a Freudian explanation for it. If only the frustrated youth were allowed to let off steam by "unfettered love-making" they wouldn't clamour for food and jobs and their arms wouldn't pound the air in anger but instead wind around their beloved ones. Well, bed if not bread, is what he means.

CHICKEN BOMB

● With the increasing violence in the metros, bomb scares have become the bane of the police. When the Bombay Police recently found a suspicious looking plastic bag lying outside a jail where members of a prominent criminal gang were imprisoned, panic buttons were im-



mediately pressed.

The army's bomb detection and disposal squad rushed to the scene, triggering off alarm among all bystanders. While some members of the bomb squad immediately took X-ray photographs of the bag, others—appropriately clad in safety apparel and headgear—busied themselves trying to yank open the bag with the help of some wires.

A minute later, the bag opened and the crisis was defused. As an all-clear signal was given by the sheepish bomb squad men, crowds milled around—to see that the bag contained nothing but some cold chicken biryani. Needless to say, the biryani bombed.

FANCY FOOTWORK

■ Calcutta's Salt Lake area could do with a smarter set of policemen. For it's obvious they have to contend with a sharp bunch of crooks. Even a DIG staying in the area had his house burgled, high walls and guards notwithstanding. The thief emphasised his triumph by impudently walking out of the house in a pair of shoes belonging to the DIG.

Nor was this the first occasion that the thieves of the locality had displayed some pretty fancy footwork. Earlier, they had stolen some heavy-duty gizmos—among them power genera-

tors and water pumps—from the neighbourhood with consummate ease.

None of the measures taken by the police in the Salt Lake area have helped. Two more police stations will soon be set up to tackle the thieves—who are ambitious enough to want to step into the DIG's boots.

JHOLA ACT

■ It was chaos of a different kind recently at a busy south Delhi intersection. And not because the light was red. But because of the sartorial preferences of the traffic policeman. The traffic policeman wasn't dressed in his typical crisply starched white

shirt and blue pants. Instead, he wore a rather frayed khadi kurta.

Daily commuters were taken aback at the strangely attired man directing the traffic. Adding to the confusion was the fact that swaying along with his arms—that waved madly in all directions—was a jhola, carelessly slung over his shoulder.

However, what jolted the commuters out of their complacency was the realisation that this wasn't the usual traffic policeman. But merely someone tired of the chaos who decided to get things moving in his own way. Who said jholawallahs are not men of action?

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INDIA-PAKISTAN

War Games

Tension between India and Pakistan raises the threat of another conflict

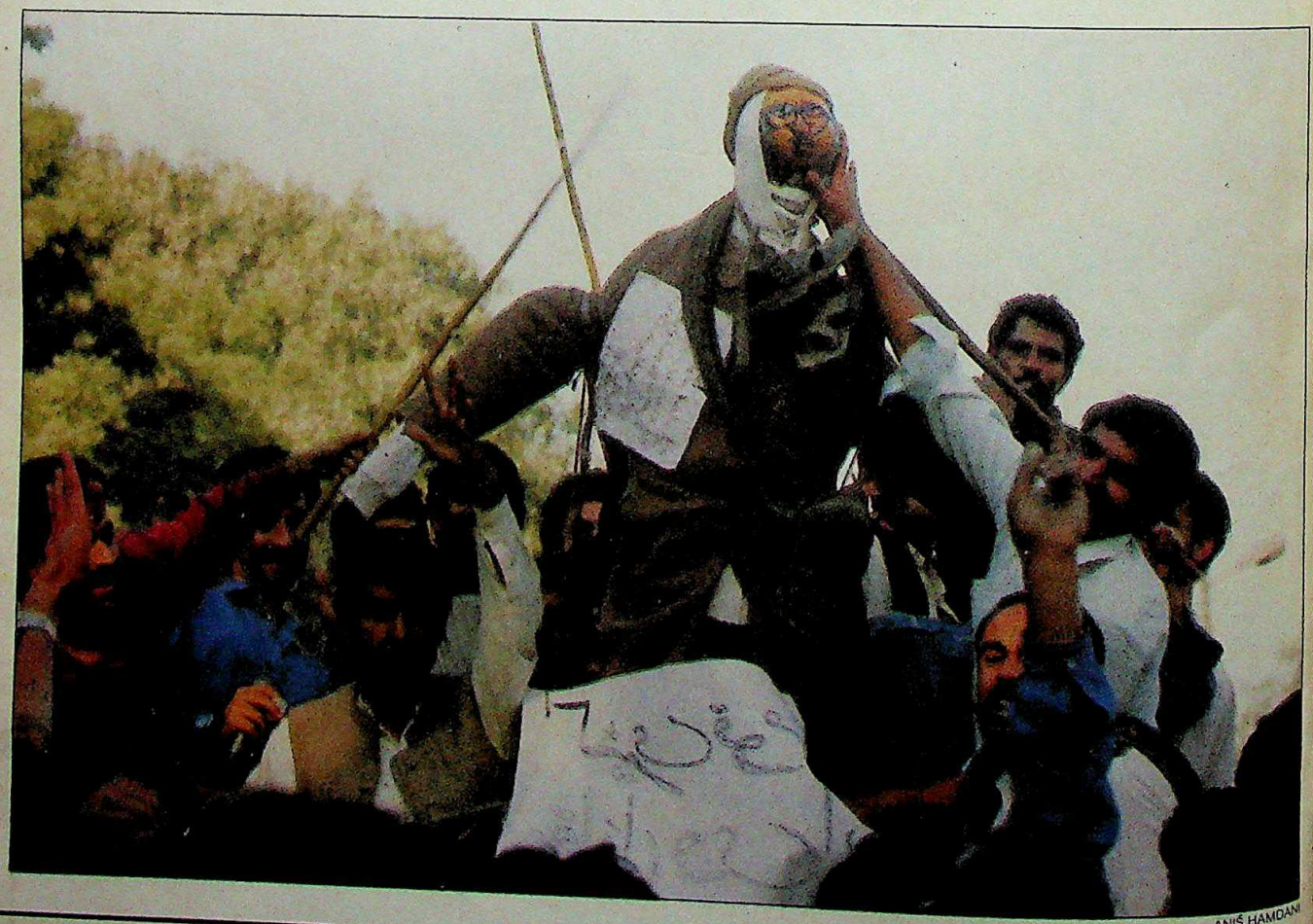
THE scenario was frighteningly familiar. The perpetual game of brinkmanship by two edgy neighbours, India and Pakistan, suddenly escalating into overheated rhetoric; the major powers forced to walk the diplomatic tightrope, and finally, the sabre-rattling and hysteria that need just one spark to explode.

While the chances of an armed conflict are currently remote, it cannot be entirely ruled out. In fact, it still largely hinges on the issue that triggered off the war hysteria: the crisis in Kashmir. The temperature was raised with the provocative statements made last week by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto *(see acompanying story)*. Said she: "In their hour of need the people of Jammu & Kashmir will not find us wanting." Such provocation has convinced India's defence strategists that while a conventional war is still unlikely, Pakistan's covert involvement in stoking the flames in Jammu & Kashmir is certain to escalate. The chances of that being interpreted by India as an act of hostility—leading to a limited military engagement—are quite high. "What we are going to see is a sustained low-level confrontation in Kashmir that could escalate," says Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, head of New Delhi's Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. Lieutenant-General Mathew Thomas, editor of the *Indian Defence Review*, predicts that Islamabad will opt for "a festering-sore campaign. A psychological rather than military war. And hope for a civil war in Kashmir."

But even without the Kashmir factor, there are other strategic imperatives that could play an equally decisive role. The most obvious is the evolution and changes in Pakistan's military and in its strategic planning, or, as Pakistan's army chief General Mirza Aslam Beg recently put it, "the emergence of new realities".

Foremost among these is the belief that the decisive military edge that India has always had over Pakistan has narrowed considerably in the last decade. In fact, many defence analysts are convinced that in terms of a 'short, sharp war' of say two or three weeks, as is likely, there is virtual parity. On paper and because of its enormous size, India seems to have overwhelming superiority of forces and

■ **Anti-India demonstrators in Karachi burning V.P. Singh's effigy: fuelling war hysteria**



ANIS HAMDANI

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weaponry. But Pakistan's comprehensive defence modernisation programme over the past decade has changed the strategic scenario dramatically. Says former army chief General K. Sundarji: "After Afghanistan and the massive inputs of aid, certainly this edge of ours has been eroded." Adds defence analyst K. Subrahmanyam: "In many areas they are now almost equal."

Thus, in Pakistan's military eyes, the advantages of a military adventure against India outweigh the disadvantages. The evolution of Pakistan's strategic planning has revolved around the theory of a brief and bloody conflict coupled with the element of surprise and initiative. This, they believe, will give them initial territorial gains and the ability to cause considerable damage to Indian targets before international intervention ensures a cease-fire. The reason this strategy failed in 1965 and 1971 was that Pakistan did not have a high enough quality of military leadership.

Now, that has changed considerably. Over the last decade, the Pakistan Army has successfully made the transition to an 'Islamic army', an army of believers and defenders of the faith. In terms of motivation and morale, that is a crucial factor. There is also a much greater degree of professionalism and a corresponding increase in the quality of leadership and strategic thinking.

Added to this is the dramatic enhancement of Pakistan's military strength with the induction of sophisticated weaponry. What has further bolstered military confidence is Pakistan's nuclear capability and its deterrent factor. Finally, there is the 'new reality' in the Indian states of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, which have historically been the setting for Indo-Pakistan conflicts. The growing insurgency in the two states gives Pakistani strategists greater confidence in a war scenario on the assumption that local populations will be hostile to Indian forces.

ALL this dovetails neatly with Pakistan's strategic policy based on an "offensive defensive" posture. What this means is that Pakistan is prepared to take the initiative and launch an offensive in order to gain the initial advantage. Pakistan fully realises that in the event of a protracted conflict (anything beyond three weeks) India's greater military strength and numerical superiority will eventually turn the tide and cause considerable territorial loss. In a recent interview General Beg said: "We have shifted to a policy of offensive defence. Should there be war, the army plans to take the war into India, launching a sizeable offensive."

In the Indian strategic context, its massive size has ensured that its force deployment is spread over a large area, posing problems of rapid mobility, coordination, communications and supply lines. Pakistan, because of its smaller size, thus has greater flexibility and mobility apart from having a smaller area and less targets to defend. Consequently, Pakistan's main-line forces, organised into 19 divisions (grouped under six corps) largely face east. A majority of its soldiers and almost all its tanks are dedicated to the lengthy border with India.

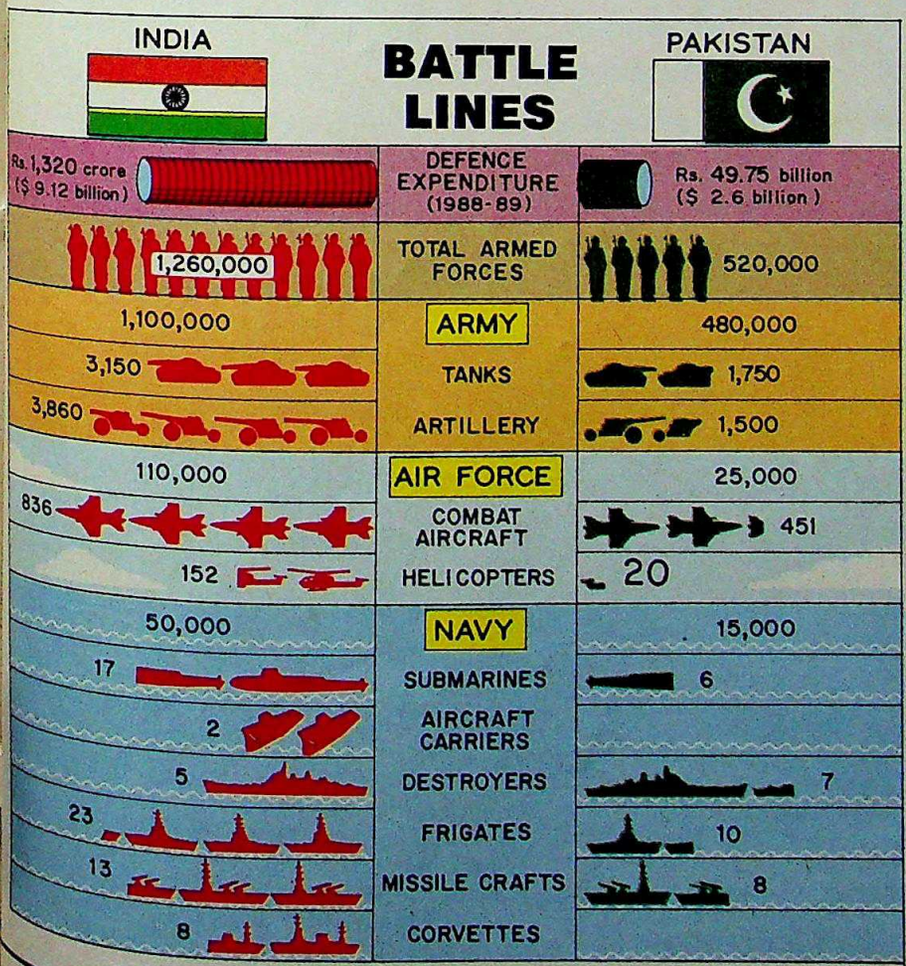
But in the changing battlefield scenario of the '80s and the induction on both sides of sophisticated weaponry of mass destruction, Pakistan's smaller size is also a serious strategic disadvantage. Because it is narrow (north to south) its lines of communication, its main military and air force bases, its only port at Karachi and its major industrial centres lie within striking distance of Indian Air Force (IAF) fighters and new, long-range missiles.

As in the last two wars, the main battlefield will be the Punjab-Sind-Rajasthan area, largely desert and rolling plains, where the topography allows for swift and largely unimpeded movement of tanks. However, the strategic compulsions and equipment of 1971 are now largely obsolete. A war between the two countries in 1990 will be vastly different from the two earlier battles where India's numerical military strength and superior strategy gave it an overwhelming edge.

The two intervening decades have seen a revolution in battlefield capabilities. Conventional weaponry like tanks, aircraft and guns are now sophisticated fighting platforms with tremendous firepower and accuracy. This period has ushered in a missile environment that has brought with it a deadly array of weaponry capable of razing large buildings, destroying airfields and stopping a tank assault in its tracks. It has also made the 'battle of the beam' (electronics warfare) a decisive factor in any future conflict.

No more are the two sides judged by numbers. It's the destructive force of individual weaponry that matters. The buzz-phrase among defence analysts is "force multipliers" or how aircraft like F-16 or MiG-29s can single-handedly cause as much destruction as a whole artillery battalion. As Jasjit Singh says: "Previously it was essentially a line-of-sight battle. You saw something and you shot it. Now, it's a whole new battle and no one really can predict the outcome."

Defence analysts point out that Pakistan's Zarb-e-Momin exercise showed that the Pakistani reserves were extremely



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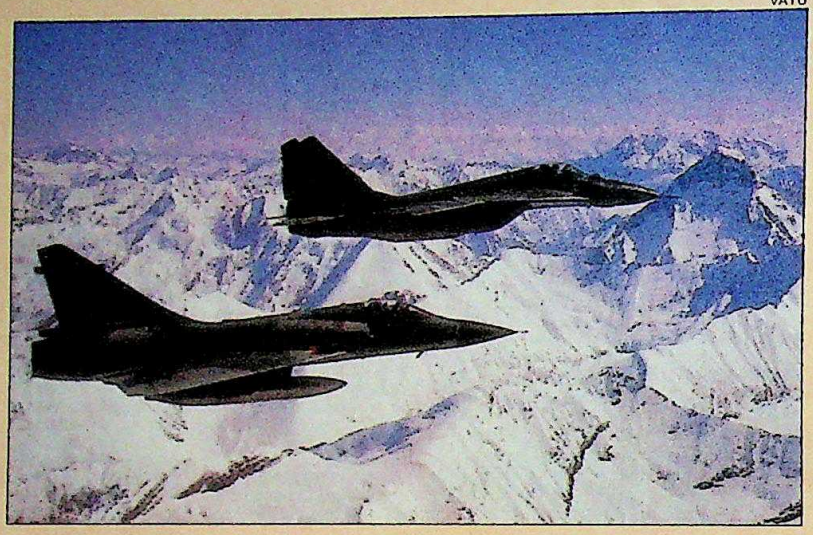
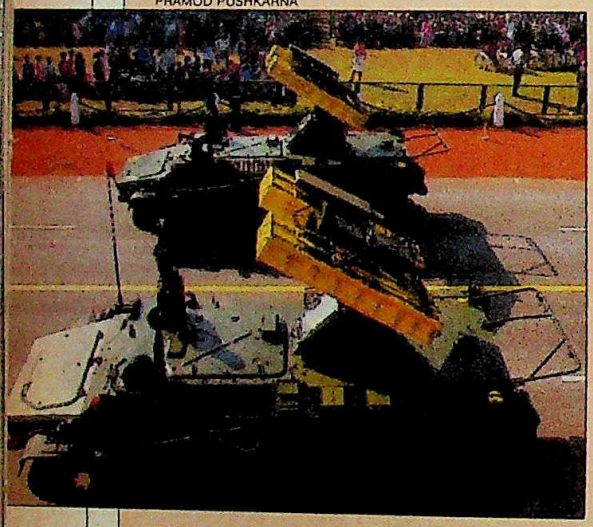


The IAF's versatile Mirage 2000 and the deadly MiG-29

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The Strela 10-M missile launcher

India's overwhelming military superiority will be largely blunted in a short sharp war of two or three weeks.

K. RAMESH

Chakra adds an entirely new dimension to naval warfare

strong in the crucial north-south axis. It had not only built up two offensive corps in these sectors but had two lethal strike corps that included an armoured division and an independent armoured brigade equipped with T-59 tanks, an independent infantry brigade, three infantry divisions and two artillery brigades. Backing these were an array of TOW anti-tank launchers and a whole squadron (20 aircraft) of the deadly Cobra attack helicopters. "These are colossal reserves capable of inflicting heavy damage in a war," says Thomas.

In the main battle tank arena, which experts predict would be a decisive factor especially in the battle for the plains, technological innovations have altered the factors considerably. Night vision equipment like thermal imaging means that tank battles are no longer confined to daylight hours. Laser range finders provide greater accuracy.

Even so, India's inventory of Soviet-built T-72 tanks gives it a decisive edge over Pakistan's Main Battle Tank, the Chinese-built T-59. The T-72 is much more modern and lethal, has a smaller silhouette which makes detection difficult, an automatic loader, and one of the biggest calibre guns. Its armour plates are made of special composites that make it impervious to attacks from conventional ammunition. Pakistan's armoured divisions still have relatively outdated tanks.

Further, under Sundarji, there was greater stress on mechanisation of the infantry. The resulting Reorganised Army Plains Infantry Division (RAPID) has less overall infantry combat power compared to a conventional infantry division but this is compensated by its enhanced mobility and flexibility as well as greater target acquisition, surveillance capability and anti-tank potential.

The artilleries of the two sides have seen the introduction of big guns that combine enormous fire-power, range and "shoot and scoot" facilities to avoid being targets of attack themselves. The most devastating are rocket launching regiments on both sides. A battery of Indian BM-21 rocket launchers have a capability of firing 240 rockets in 20 seconds that can virtually saturate a square kilometre of territory.

However, in the event of a 'short, sharp war', the tank battle in the desert and the plains—the main theatre of war—will not be all that one-sided. With the advantage of being the aggressor, Pakistan's armoured divisions can make lightning strikes into Indian territory and cause considerable damage before the Indian Army's superior numbers and its T-72s begin to turn the tide. Conse-

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quently, the tank battle will be more cerebral than conventional. As Major Shankar Bhaduri, editorial consultant, *Indian Defence Review*, says: "In a short war, it will be the quality and calibre of military leadership in the field that will count more than fire-power."

Assuming that Pakistan makes the first move, experts have worked out several war scenarios. One is that instead of making the traditionally half-hearted attack on the Chamb sector, Pakistan would concentrate on a full-blooded attack on the Shakargarh bulge. The strategy would be to capture Indian towns in the border like Poonch for its psychological effect on the Kashmir Valley. Meanwhile, stir up an armed insurrection in the valley to throw Indian forces into disarray. The idea is to stampede Indian forces into committing one of their reserve corps in a time-losing counter-attack.

THE Indian reaction, however, may not be a defensive one. Instead of committing its strike corps in pushing back Pakistani forces, it may well begin an offensive and in an encircling move, steadily destroy the Pakistani support lines behind its striking corps.

The other option open to Pakistan is to launch a 'wild-cat' attack: concentrate its two giant reserve corps on a major but limited thrust north and south of the Sutlej. The idea is to get close to a few border towns in Punjab and put pressure on the Indian Army.

Presuming Pakistan takes the military initiative, the Indian Army has several options. Launch a major offensive in the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir area and capture several crucial towns; concentrate the attack on the two Pakistani strike corps and pulverise them. (In this the air superiority that India enjoys could play a crucial role). Don't get stampeded into a defensive mode even if Pakistan has made a few gains. Instead choose a time and place, launch a full counter-attack with the help of the IAF and make a deep thrust into Pakistani territory. Such a thrust is most likely to take place either in the deserts that separate the two or the plains of Punjab. In short, the Indian strategy would be to prolong the war so that its military superiority wins the day and launch surprise offensives that would send the enemy into disarray.

In the air, experts argue that India has a clear superiority because of the range of aircraft it has in its possession. "In the air, we'll beat the hell out of them," says Jasjit Singh, a former fighter pilot of repute himself. Others are not so sure. While the IAF Jaguars can hit most targets in Pakistan, the Pakistan Air Force's (PAF) F-16s,

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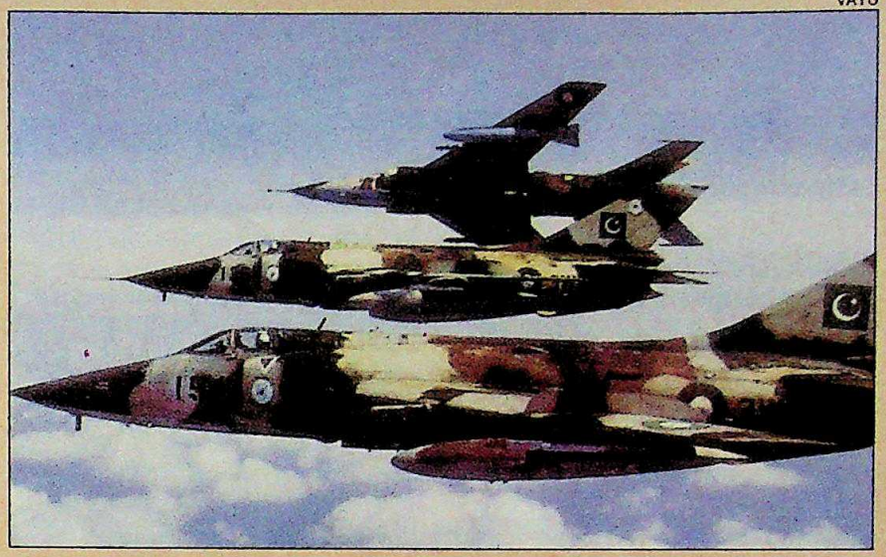

■ The Nanchang Q-5, the PAF's main support and attack fighter

Pakistan's recent weapons modernisation programme has convinced them they have military parity.

■ Harpoons give the navy extra punch

■ The Crotale missile can cause deadly destruction

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lethal force-multipliers, are equally capable of hitting major civilian-cum-military targets like Pune or the nuclear and naval installations in Bombay. Pakistan currently has two squadrons (45) F-16s, five squadrons (90 aircraft) of Mirage 3s and 5s armed with Sidewinder missiles, four squadrons of the Chinese-made F-7s operating out of the Sargodha complex. These, along with the three squadrons of Nanchang Q-5s provide the PAF with its offensive air support. Pakistan's proudest acquisition after the F-16s are 'force multiplier' Cobra attack helicopters.

India's mix of combat aircraft is clearly more lethal. For dedicated air defence the IAF has two squadrons of Mirage 2000s, the multi-role fighters that IAF pilots are ecstatic about, three squadrons of MiG-29s that are considered better than the F-16 in many respects, the MiG-21 bis, the MiG-21FC and the MiG-23 MF. In the ground attack and close air support role, it has the MiG-21M and the highly rated MiG-23 and MiG-27. In addition, the IAF has four Jaguar squadrons for deep penetration strikes (plus one for maritime strike), two squadrons of MiG-25Rs for high-altitude reconnaissance and a squadron of Mi-25 helicopter gunships. India's air defence is bolstered by four squadrons of the deadly surface-to-air (SAM) missiles that include 38 squadrons of SAM-3s and SAM-13s.

But in a 'short, sharp war', the battle for the skies will only prove decisive for the IAF after the first 10 days. Till then, Pakistan, with its smaller air defence zone, will probably be able to hold its own and inflict as much damage as the IAF does. But the PAF is still in the process of inducting new aircraft types and reorganising its air strategy. That, in the opinion of experts, gives the IAF superiority in the skies. Where Pakistan scores is in electronic warfare.

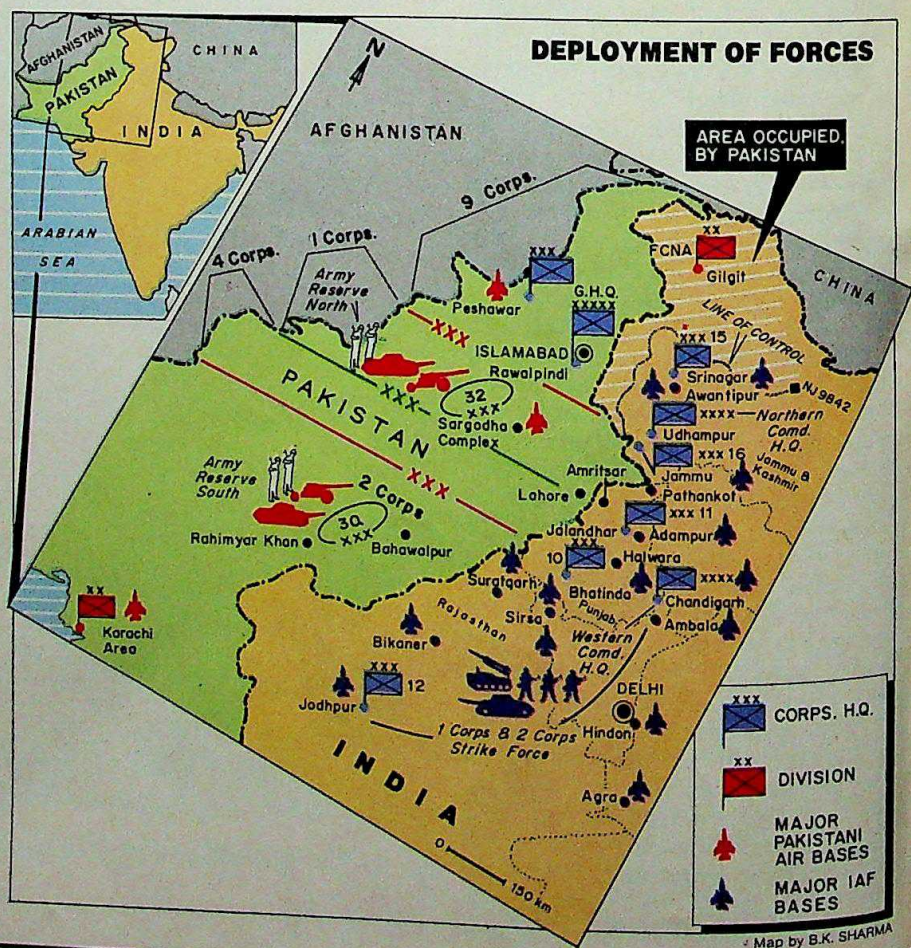
A crucial factor in the outcome of the war will be the 'battle of the beam'. The past decade has seen dramatic developments in electronic warfare, or 'hidden force multipliers'. Powerful radars in the electromagnetic and optical fields have been developed and with them electronic countermeasures to jam such equipment. That has led to the development of electronic counter counter measures (ECCM) where jamming is avoided by switching frequencies or changing to optical modes like lasers. More crucially, the electronic battle will be fought to disrupt the crucial Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence set-up of the other side. As retired Air Marshal Vir Narain says: "The radar battle has to be won first. Whoever does it will have the edge."

The electronics battle has become crucial because of the proliferation of deadly precision guided missiles that have invaded the subcontinent. Both countries now have a hostile battery of missiles that include Exocets, Matras, Sparrows and Sidewinders. The missile warfare has pushed the battle into the beyond visual range arena, where warheads can traverse distances ranging from 20 km to 100 km, at fantastic speeds and pack the most lethal explosives.

THE successful launching of Prithvi, a surface-to-surface tactical missile with a range of up to 250 km and ability to carry warheads up to a tonne, gives India a major strategic capability over Pakistan. Though the cost of each Prithvi (Rs 1.7 crore) would restrict its use, its range and deadly warheads could be used to strike at Pakistani targets with deadly accuracy. Pakistan has reportedly test-fired Hatf 2 that claims to match Prithvi's capabilities.

India's decisive naval superiority has also gradually been chipped away by the expansion of the Pakistan Navy in the past year. Pakistan doubled its surface fleet by adding eight more Brooke-Garcia class frigates. What the Indian Navy fears most is the powerful offensive punch embodied by Pakistan's seven modern attack submarines (three Agosta, four Daphne) which are faster, more manoeuvrable and less easy to detect than India's eight Foxtrot submarines or the six Kilo class subs. A Harpoon missile launched from any of the subs will allow Pakistan to engage Indian naval vessels or land-based targets outside the range of anti-submarine torpedoes. Pakistan's naval doctrine of 'sea denial', based on its smaller fleet of surface vessels, has been to bolster its subsurface strength to deny the superior Indian Navy its strategic objective of 'sea control'.

But India seems to have regained the edge in subsurface warfare with the recent purchase of the two modern HDW T-209 submarines and, much more decisively, with the acquisition, on lease, of Chakra, the Soviet Charlie 1 class nuclear submarine. Powered by a nuclear reactor, the Chakra can travel underwater at high speeds for weeks at a time unlike conventional diesel-powered subs which have to surface comparatively frequently, increasing the risk of being spotted. Fitted with long-range guided torpedoes and guided missiles and an array of underwater detection devices, the force-multiplier can hunt its prey—surface ships or submarines—from long distances without detection. But in a short war, the capability of Pakistan's subsurface force to harass shipping, destroy enemy targets and initially deny the Indian Navy 'sea control'



Map by B.K. SHARMA

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annot be underestimated.

In surface warfare, however, there is o question that the Indian Navy's fleet of wo aircraft carriers with the highly-ersatile Harrier jump jets, four Kashin lass destroyer leaders, its Godavari, Le-nder, Whitney and Soviet-built Petya lass frigates and the three modified resta-class missile cruisers on order is a rmidable order of battle. In contrast, akistan has just two cruisers, six de-royers and eight frigates.

What could prove a major deterrent to both sides is the prohibitive cost of a conflict. With the cost of a day's battle estimated at anything between Rs 500 crore and Rs 700 crore, neither side can afford to have a sustained battle. Current indications are that Pakistan is not likely to engage in an all-out conflict over Kashmir. The most likely scenario is that Islamabad will go for the 'low cost option', namely covert interference in Jammu & Kashmir to ensure that the insurgency escalates. This could take the form of increased arms supplies to the Kashmir militants, providing them with more destructive weaponry and explosives and sending in infiltrators in civilian garb to coordinate strategy and delineate targets.

The bottomline is that Islamabad has raised the stakes on Kashmir to a new high and the tension level between the two countries is currently poised at the danger mark. Crossing it would mean plunging the subcontinent into a bloody and expensive battle which neither side really wants—or can afford.

—DILIP BOBB with RAJ CHENGAPPA

PAKISTAN

Raising the Stakes

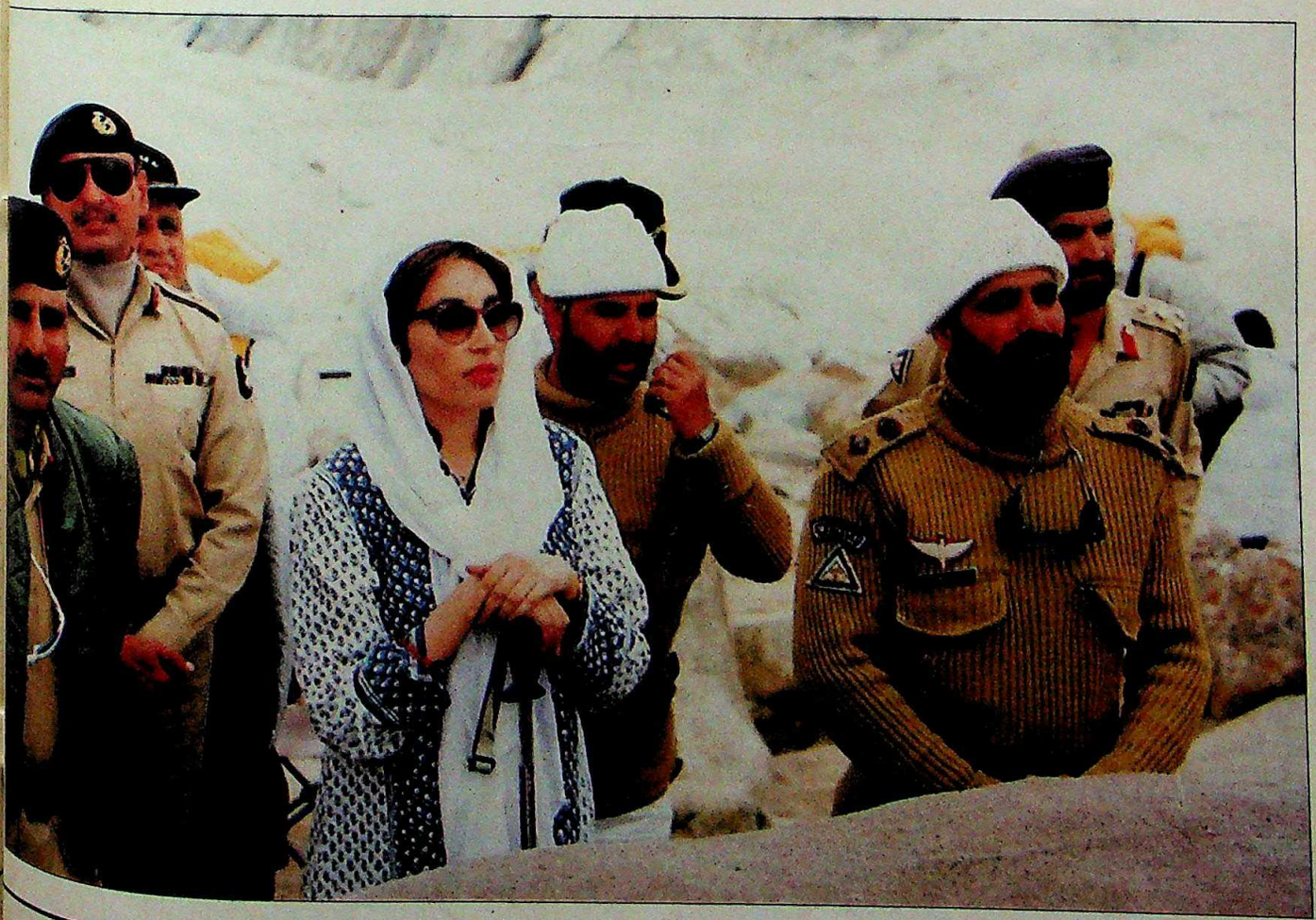
Nobody wants war but political compulsions restrict the options

THE war of words between India and Pakistan may not yet spill over to the battlefields, already thrice bloodied nce the Partition. Yet the rhetoric is at gh tide. Until as recently as January, ashmir was on the back burner. Smart-g from its failure in Afghanistan, Pakistan seemed to have forgotten the valley.

But when the situation deteriorated in the state last month, the Kashmir problem was suddenly catapulted to centrestage in Pakistan—in the process altering drastically its political contours. Like a catalyst, it united, however briefly, a nation pulled apart ethnically and polarised politically.

How important Kashmir became was clear from the total response to the nation-wide call for a strike on February 5 in Rawalpindi's busy Raja Bazar. For the first time, college girls in Lahore and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) joined

Benazir's sinking popularity and the emotional upsurge over Kashmir force her to adopt a hardline



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processions with men. Groups of lawyers, labourers and students held street-corner meetings. Equally telling of the nation's new mood was a sticker on a Suzuki, which said: "Time to win Kashmir."

No leader could afford not to ride the crest of this wave. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto emerged after the birth of her daughter Bakhtavar, on January 25, to address a joint session of Parliament on February 10, called to discuss the Kashmir issue. Referring to the "bloodstains in the beautiful valley", she said: "Can the Muslim Ummah and Pakistan remain silent—a mass uprising can't be termed the work of miscreants." The armed forces, she said, were "ready and vigilant to defend the motherland".

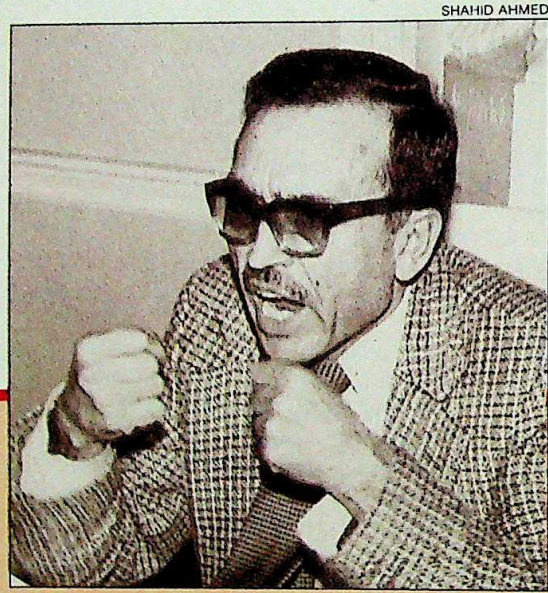
The words were sharp but Benazir had few options. Some opposition members had set the tone by calling for a *Jehad* during the debate in the National Assembly a few days earlier. Says Syeda Abida Hussian, National Assembly member from Punjab: "No Pakistani can say Kashmir is not disputed. The Islamic identity is a large part of our identity. And the Kashmir struggle is viewed as an Islamic Kashmir struggle." But nobody, except perhaps the Mullahs, wants war.

The army has kept remarkably quiet other than making noises about being prepared for any eventuality. General Mirza Aslam Beg, chief of army staff, visited the border areas last fortnight and asked the army to be vigilant. But sources say there hasn't been any mobilisation to the front yet. "The army has just finished the Zarb-e-Momin which caused attrition to 35 per cent of the equipment," said a source, arguing that the army is not quite ready to fight.

Even President Ghulam Ishaq Khan cautioned against pushing things to a pitch where the country would be burdened with an unwanted war. "Clearly, there's a national consensus on avoiding conflict," says Foreign Secretary Tanveer Ahmed Khan. In fact, many Pakistanis feel that India might start a war if it is unable to cope with the Kashmir situation.

Last fortnight, mobs crossed the line of control twice from POK into India. On February 11—the death anniversary of Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front leader Maqbool Butt—about 100 people reportedly tried to cross the Chakothi control line. When Indian troops fired, they

SHAHID AHMED



AMANULLAH KHAN

"Everyone makes use of Kashmir"

TILL last month, Amanullah Khan, 55, chairman of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)—and his campaign for an independent Kashmir—was not taken seriously in Pakistan. But recent events in Kashmir have catapulted him to centrestage. Incidentally, Khan is from Gilgit, not the valley. Principal Correspondent MADHU JAIN *interviewed him in Islamabad last fortnight. Excerpts:*

Q. *How important was the Rubaiya incident for the JKLF?*

A. Kashmir was becoming a dead issue. The Rubaiya incident made it a national and international issue.

Q. *Do you think Rajiv Gandhi would have released your men?*

A. No. I have the greatest respect for V.P. Singh as an honest man.

Q. *Would you have killed her?*

A. If it had become unavoidable.

Q. *What're your links with JKLF militants? Do you send arms and men?*

A. The freedom movement in the centre has to guide the man on the spot. It's not impossible to get men across.

Q. *Where do you get your money?*

A. From Kashmiris the world over. There are one million in Pakistan, a quarter of a million Kashmiris from "Azad Kashmir" in the Middle East, 1,50,000 in the UK. We have three organisations in the Middle East and five in Europe to collect money.

Q. *But other Kashmiri groups here want Kashmir to go to Pakistan.*

A. Seventy per cent of the youth are with me. Yesterday I was alone. When I talked of independent Kashmir, Pakistanis dubbed me an Indian agent. Today the JKLF is the most important party in the valley.

Q. *And the other leaders.*

A. Qayyum is important. He has deep roots in Pakistan and many friends in the Islamic Democratic Alliance. Sardar Ibrahim is a dual personality. As PPP head in "Azad Kashmir", he has to refer to the Shimla agreement. In his personal capacity, he talks of an independent Kashmir.

Q. *What is your idea of Kashmir.*

A. Kashmir'll be like Switzerland. We'll be friendly to both Pakistan and India. We can meet in Srinagar—you with your Indian passport, the Pakistani journalist with his.

Q. *And non-Muslim Kashmiris?*

A. The Kashmiri pundits are our brethren.

Q. *Does the Pakistan Government help get your men across the border?*

A. The Indian charge of Pakistani infiltration is nonsense.

Q. *But talking about independent Kashmir in Pakistan.*

A. Yes. I am a source of embarrassment to Pakistan.... We kept our moves a secret from both India and Pakistan.

Q. *Isn't Kashmir a pawn?*

A. Everyone uses Kashmir. Only 10 per cent of Nawaz Sharief's support is genuine sympathy, 90 per cent is to be used against the PPP. Benazir Bhutto observes a week of solidarity to repulse Sharief's influence. In India, Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP and the communists use Kashmir against V.P. Singh.

Q. *Can they imprison you here?*

A. If Benazir Bhutto sends me behind bars for even a day, there will be a hue and cry in "Azad Kashmir".

Q. *Why was Mhatre killed?*

A. Because of the follies of the Indian High Commission. They poked their noses into it. I offered to save him. But they pressurised the British Police to arrest me, and Mhatre got killed.

Q. *Are you anybody's agent?*

A. I was in prison in Pakistan for 15 months in 1971 for being an Indian agent. Simultaneously, I was being tried in absentia in Srinagar.

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SARDAR ABDUL QAYYUM

"You can't avoid war"

SARDAR Abdul Qayyum, President of "Azad Kashmir" has called for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. He talks of leading four lakh men, peacefully, across the line of control. Principal Correspondent MADHU JAIN *spoke to him in Islamabad. Excerpts from the interview:*

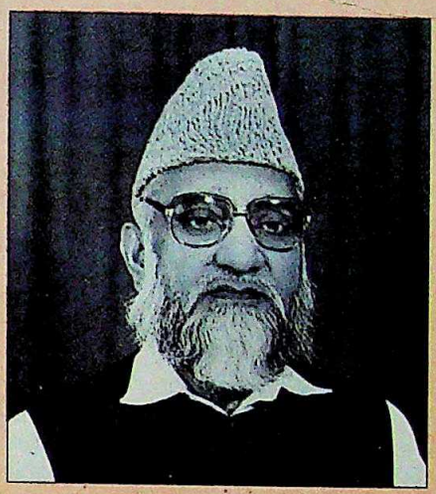
On the reason for accession to Pakistan.

Independent Kashmir would be an irritant to the Soviet Union and China. And also a stab in the back to both India and Pakistan.

On the possibility of war over Kashmir.

You can't avoid war at my cost. But there can't be war until the snow melts. Both governments are weak—that leads to desperate actions. My goal is plebiscite.

Twelve million people will lay down their lives. If nobody survives, let it be so. "Azad Kashmir" can blow up. Eighty per cent of the people are militants: retired army officers and tribals.



On activity on the line of control.

About 100 refugees have crossed over but they were people bogged down on the cease-fire line. We'll stop people from coming here. It is we who have to go there—this is going in from the wrong end.

On help from the Pakistan Government.

The whole nation had been united on Kashmir until what happened in Sind. Their responsibility towards Kashmir should be more than just briefings. They haven't even made up their minds on what to do. General Zia had begun to support us.

On Kashmiri Hindus.

They will have no problem. We have lived amicably together in Kashmir all these years.

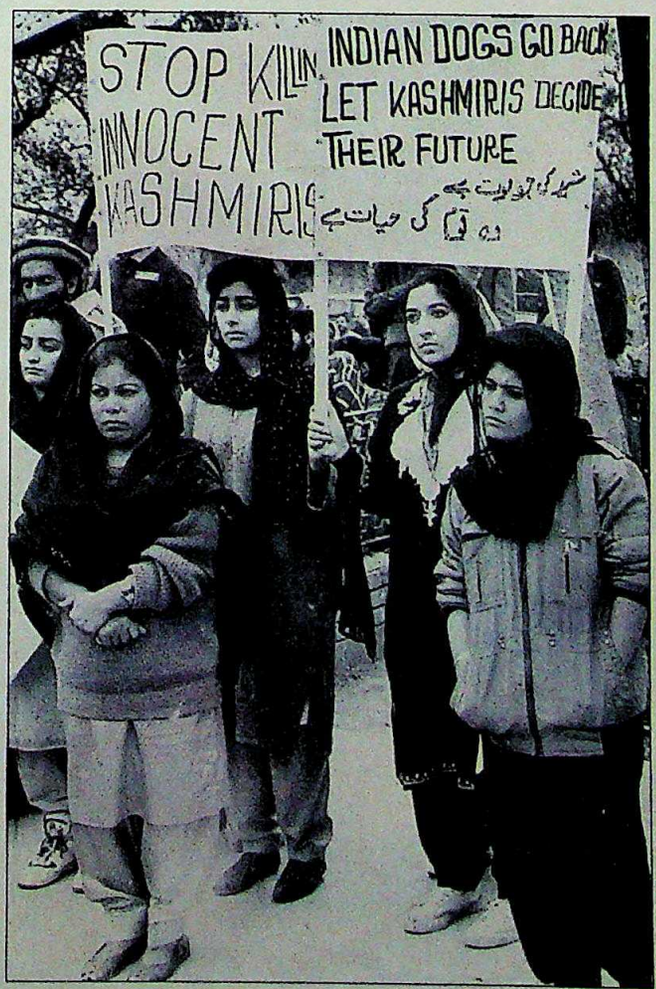
On arms going into the valley.

Not officially, but they may be trickling across.

dispersed, returning later with twice the number of people. The army then fired two bursts of Sten-guns. The Pakistanis claim some people were killed.

These incidents may not have had serious consequences yet, but whatever happens in the valley sets off waves of anger in POK. Says a senior diplomat: "If India can manage Kashmir—not in terms of guns, but by politicising it back to normalcy—there is a chance of peace." But if it cannot, and the situation continues until after the snow has melted in April, it is likely that hotheads will attempt more crossings. The Pakistan Government might not find it easy to control them.

A major factor in favour of peace is that the superpowers do not want a scrap in the subcontinent in which they are forced to take sides. It is believed that the US has asked Pakistan to cool down the talk of war. The Pakistan Foreign Office too has tried to keep saner counsel. In the wake of Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh's sorties to Moscow and Washington, Iqbal Akhund, adviser to Benazir on national security, will visit the two capitals to explain Pakistan's point of view. Says Tanveer Ahmed Khan: "India has scared the western countries as well as Arab nations, by talking about a crescent of Muslim fundamentalism from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iran and Kashmir. The Government does not want to be accused of fanning the flame of Muslim fundamentalism."



■ **Anti-India protest rally in Karachi**

Kashmir has become a litmus test for patriotism in Pakistan and a ready election issue in India. Some opposition members say the Kashmir issue is a blessing in disguise for both governments. Says Maulana Kauser Niazi, former minister of information and broadcasting in Bhutto's cabinet: "There are weak governments on both sides. The tough talk is for internal consumption. We cannot really afford this *ayyashi* (hedonism)."

Benazir, after a silence of two weeks, came out with tough words, perhaps to offset criticism of her being "soft on India." She is on the defensive as she has other problems too. Last fortnight, ethnic violence in Karachi left over 50 dead. Sind continues to smoulder. Add to this an increasingly powerful president, an army on standby, an ambitious ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) and she is left with little room for manoeuvre, dogged as she is by the three 'K's: Karachi, Kalashnikovs and Kashmir. The last thing she needs is war and she has to do all she can to prevent emotions from rising through the month of Ramazan. Else, the subcontinent could be in for what noted journalist Mushahid Hussain calls a "long, hot summer".

—MADHU JAIN in Islamabad

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Asserting Authority

With Governor Jagmohan at the helm, a semblance of law and order has been restored to the crisis-ridden state, but there is a long haul ahead

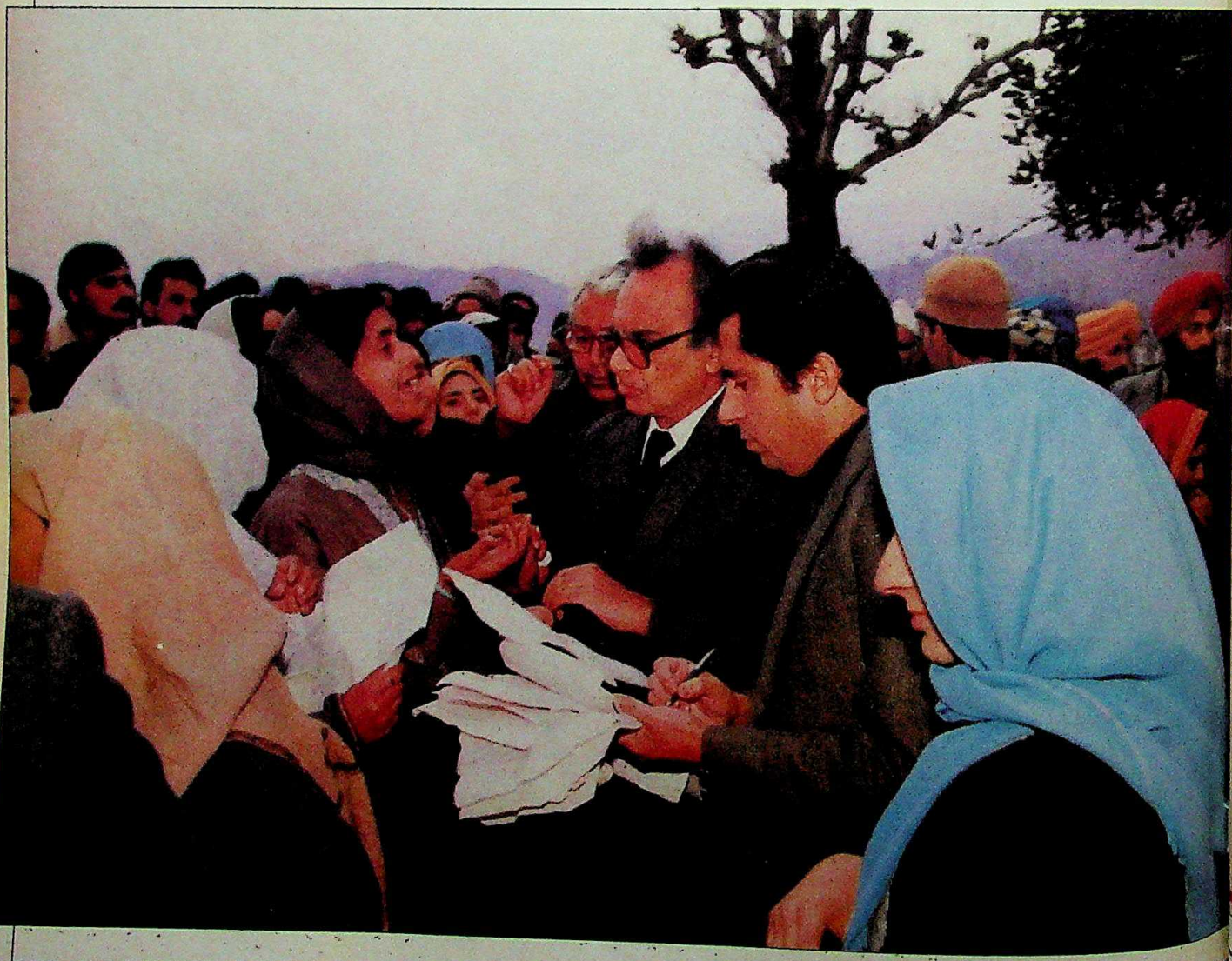
A grey winter chill hangs over the valley where the maximum temperature still hovers at barely 5 degrees celsius and where the daylong drizzle turns into sleet at sundown making the streets of towns like Srinagar, Anantnag, Sopore and Baramulla slippery and uncomfortable for the *phiren*-clad Kashmiris. Just as it is for the 9,000-odd jawans from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh who form the 57 CRPF and BSF companies now keeping an armed vigil in the by-lanes, crossroads and bridges.

Near Gupkar Road and the boulevard that snakes along Dal Lake, a politically wounded Farooq Abdullah, hands tucked inside the fur-lined jacket of a turquoise parka, takes lonely and silent walks, perhaps to demonstrate that he is not frightened of his own people. And that he can walk alone unmolested while Governor Jagmohan, for whose head terrorist organisations are offering Rs 5 lakh, has to be guarded around the clock.

In Raj Bhawan, but a few minutes drive away, the lights burn all night as they do at the mini winter secretariat nearby. The governor rarely retires before midnight and sleeps for no more than five hours, when he awakens to read intelligence briefs on the law and order situation and files on follow-up action on grievances brought to him daily by the people.

This must surely be the leanest administrative structure in India. Even while the Government of the state is still housed in the temperate clime of Jammu, the winter capital, Jagmohan, with no more than a dozen civilian and police officials, has been camping in the unheated Raj Bhawan, a freezing outpost from where he's coordinating perhaps the most sensitive firefighting mission of the country.

Raj Bhawan springs to life at 8 a.m. when streams of people, in defiance of boycott calls and threats, flock to its well-guarded gates for a job, a hearing, to air a



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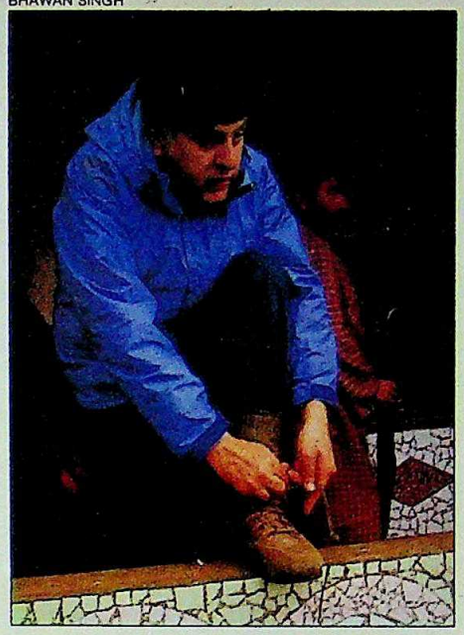
grievance. Jagmohan, the "nursing orderly", as he described himself during his swearing-in ceremony, invites them in batches of 25 to his office, seats them, listens and orders immediate action.

AND their numbers are swelling. On Friday, January 9, when curfew was declared at 11 a.m. following the gunning down of two BSF jawans—the first major act of violence after about 10 days of calm—some 250 people flocked to Raj Bhawan starting at 7 a.m. Special curfew passes were issued to people who wanted to offer prayers at local mosques. The day passed without incident.

It is still too early to say that doves of peace swarm the valley. And no one expects that Kashmiris will start singing the Indian national anthem just because Jagmohan, who had once endeared himself to them with his good works as an administrator, is now back and Farooq is out. What has returned is a sense of law and order and some evidence that people want normalcy. On most days now, curfew is relaxed for as many as 12 hours. Significantly, January 11—the day

BHAWAN SINGH



Farooq Abdullah: politically wounded

Maqbool Butt, the Kashmiri separatist, was hanged six years ago—passed off without a single incident for the first time in several years, despite widespread apprehensions of violence. And on January 5 and 6 when the militants, particularly the Kashmir Liberation Front (KLF), had asked for a total strike in support of the solidarity week being organised in Pakistan, shops in major parts of downtown Srinagar, in Rawalpura, in Barzulla, and down Silk Factory Road bustled with commerce. Buses and transport plied on the Jammu-Srinagar Highway through Pampore and Awantipora, Bij Behara and Anantnag, and children played cricket in soaking playfields.

In Anantnag, the fount of militancy, the KLF has gone underground. Politicians have disappeared into the woodwork. Now and then gangs of rudderless youth rampage through Shaheed Chowk and Cheeni Bazaar pelting stones and shouting slogans. On close questioning, however, their grievances are the same: corrupt officials; brutal policemen; no jobs; no one to talk to—not Farooq, who is hated, not leaders of the Muslim United Front who are discredited; not their MLAs who are corrupt. So they blame India. Says Qasim Sajjad who edits the *Daily Shohaeb:* "You lock up a few corrupt

INTERVIEW

"Dissolve the Assembly"

JAGMOHAN has over the years developed the reputation of being a trouble-shooter. True to form, even at the very epicentre of the Jammu and Kashmir crisis, he remains composed and confident. Executive Editor INDERJIT BADHWAR *spoke to him in Srinagar. Excerpts:*

Q. *Farooq Abdullah is objecting to your appointment primarily on the ground that you had dismissed him on July 2, 1984.*

A. I am amazed at his stand. Farooq knows very well that, even on July 2, 1984, I had recommended the imposition of Governor's rule, and not the installation of the G.M. Shah ministry.

Q. *What about the controversy over the search conducted in the early morning of January 20, 1990?*

A. I was sworn in at Jammu in the evening of January 19, 1990, and the search took place in Srinagar in the early morning of January 20. Clearly, the decision was taken before I took over.

Q. *Do you think there was a conspiracy against you in regard to this search?*

A. It was a case of sheer political and administrative bungling and non-application of mind, so characteristic of the previous regime. I have already ordered an administrative inquiry into it.

Q. *Are searches and raids now being organised daily under your orders and personal supervision?*

A. I would do everything permitted by law to break the iron bars of the cage of terrorism.

Q. *What about casualties?*

A. Unfortunately, a section of the media, particularly the foreign media, has highly exaggerated the casualty figures. Actual casualties are less than 50. We propose to publish a list of casualities and then ask those who have given the exaggerated figures to supply full particulars. For me, whether A loses his life or B, it is the blood of all of us that spills. We must stop all this.

Q. *Would you like to comment on the criticism about your appointment?*

A. I have accepted the assignment solely with the motivation of lending a helping hand in overcoming a national crisis. I have exposed myself and my family to grave personal risk. I am not even drawing my pay. I have a broken and shattered administrative machinery at my disposal. If the commander is sniped at every day, the chances of success could well be imagined.

Q. *What is your basic approach to solving the crisis?*

A. The best way of solving the crisis is to assert the authority of the State and create an impression that, no matter what the cost, the subversionists and their collaborators will be firmly dealt with and eliminated. Also, it is important to adopt an absolutely just and fair approach to the people.

Q. *What about a political solution?*

A. First, we need a grace period to restore people's confidence by giving them an important freedom—freedom from corruption and exploitation. I also recommend the State Assembly be dissolved and fresh elections be held after six months or so. By that time some of the subversive elements would be eliminated and some would prefer to give up the path of violence and participate in elections. A new leadership may emerge which would perceive the advantage of working within the Indian Constitution, the cornerstone of which is justice—political, social and economic.

Jagmohan listening to grievances

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officials and treat these youths with respect and you will see the difference."

Yet these are only silver linings behind which hovers an ominous black cloud of mistrust and rebellion. School walls are plastered with "Indian dogs go home" Army officers have been told to send their families home or to withdraw to army bases from civilian areas. Schoolteachers are afraid to go out and teach. Eminent lawyers have resigned from government posts and will not handle government cases. Says lawyer Altaf Naik: "These are reasonable people, but they have only seen an unfair side of India which seems to have denied them rights other Indians enjoy."

BUT no matter how ugly the mood, there is reason to believe that the militant grip that had paralysed cities for more than 120 days last year through strikes and bandhs, the latest manifestation of which had been bombings and assassinations, seems to have loosened a little.

By the time Jagmohan arrived in Srinagar on January 21, there had been a mass defiance of curfews. In the next five days, with the selective use of the army to back up the police force, firings on violent mobs that took 35 lives, and banning of the mass gathering at Idgah where a declaration of independence was to be made, the militancy ebbed. Also, for the first time in two years, every government building was lit on Republic Day.

This was perhaps the first symbolic victory over the militants. It re-established for the first time, during the prolonged period of the deteriorating atmosphere, the semblance of a government in control. Within the next two days, a dozen searches were conducted including one by the army in Tral where Afghan mujahedin infiltrators were suspected to be hiding. So far no major recovery of arms (there are estimated to be at least 200 automatic weapons in the valley) or capture of militants, whose network of cells is now spreading to the villages, has been effected. But they have served to establish that the country will act forcefully in the interests of its national security. And the local police for the first time have begun to respond to directions. The thrust of the new administration is to take relentless action on the law and order front to prevent what is incipient: the use of mosques as sanctuaries for terrorists.

Arrests are being made selectively with suspects being released if no evidence can be found against them within a specified time. The main lesson so far has been that the nursing orderly can also deliver some pretty bitter medicine if necessary. —INDERJIT BADHWAR

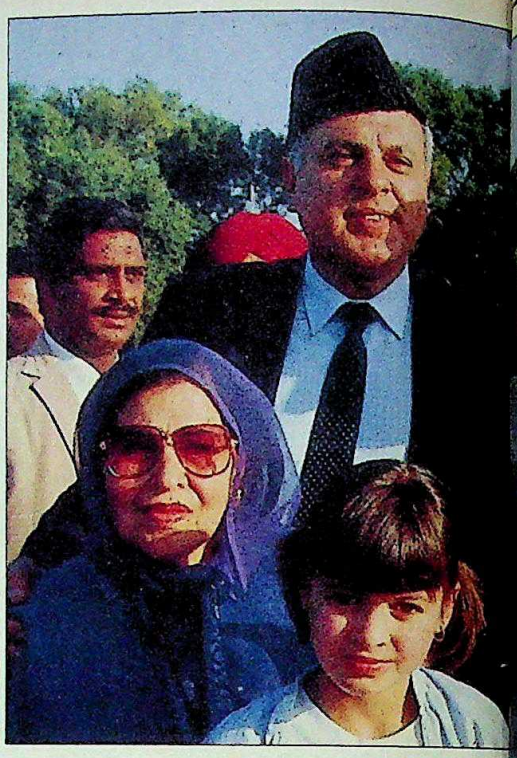
"Governor Sahib, we need you very badly. It's amazing such remarkable work could be done by you in a short time. Please do not hesitate to pull my ears if I go wrong."

FAROOQ ABDULLAH
on November 7, 1986.

◆

"While we were combating forces of violence, cries of dismissal of my government and change of governor were raised."

FAROOQ ABDULLAH
in January 1990.



CONGRESS GOVERNMENT

Inexplicable Neglect

The current crisis in the state has its roots in the callous indifference exhibited by the Congress government

THE breakdown of governance and violent revival of the separatist upsurge in the Kashmir valley were neither sudden nor unpredicted. Their new dimensions, and the reasons for the resurgence, were spelled out in graphic detail for former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in a series of urgent messages from Governor Jagmohan between March and June, 1989—shortly before the end of his first tenure .

The missives amounted to an SOS for speedy action to resolve a burgeoning threat to the nation's integrity that had traversed crisis dimensions and were rapidly reaching what Jagmohan described as "a point of no return" (*see box*). In addition, the governor personally informed former chief minister Farooq Abdullah of his concerns.

Home Ministry files reveal that the warnings were ignored. Not only that, the Congress(I) government continued uncritical support for the Abdullah government, which had received a damning indictment for its role in allowing the situation to get out of hand.

Rajiv and Farooq have now begun a concerted attack on Jagmohan's reappointment as governor. They pin on him and the Janata Dal the blame for sabotaging what they describe as a popularly-elected government (*see box*) and for the woes gripping the valley. Also, with the help of the left parties, in whose ideological scheme of things Jagmohan is identified with the BJP strategy in the valley, they have attempted to force the Centre to continue to deal with Farooq—even though he resigned in protest against Jagmohan's appointment on January 19.

Following Prime Minister V.P. Singh's recent meeting with Farooq, that appeared to give him a new legitimacy at the expense of the newly-appointed governor, Jagmohan struck back with a forthright letter to the prime minister in which he detailed how the Farooq government "due to total inaction, unbelievable incompetence, widespread corruption, and passive connivance", had led the state to disaster within two short years.

In dealing with Farooq again, the Centre, ironically, appeared to be undermining its own mission in Kashmir, as represented by the Jagmohan card. The impression created was that Farooq's return to power was imminent. And the bureaucracy, wavering between the *ancien regime* and the new dispensation,

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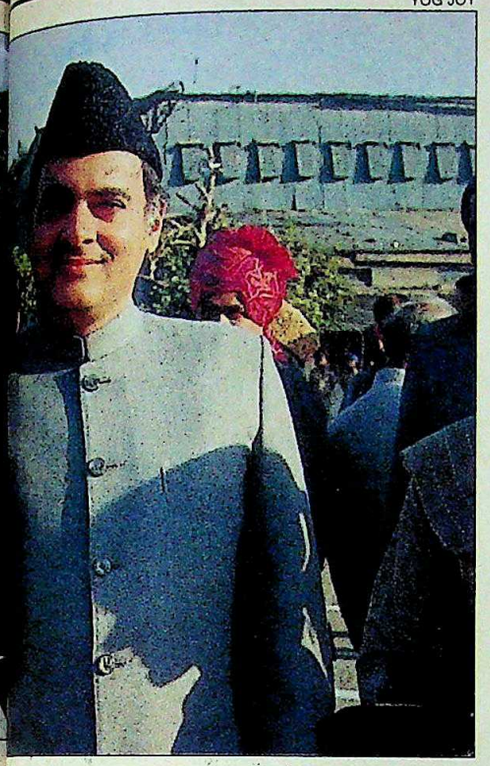
YOG JOY



"In the case of Kashmir, the Union Government bungled by sending a man who was not acceptable... (The Government) has compounded the error by dismissing the popular government there allowing Pakistan to exploit the situation."

RAJIV GANDHI
In February, 1990.

could hardly be expected to cooperate with Jagmohan.

It was clearly a political crisis not only for the new governor but for the Centre as well. Because, according to sources close to Jagmohan, he was ready to quit if he was not assured a free hand and total cooperation from the Centre. And he expressed his sentiments to V.P. Singh with a rare candour. "I would beg of you to send our critics to Kashmir," he wrote. "Reality may dawn upon them."

Subsequently, Jagmohan has managed to secure the public backing of V.P. Singh. But the last thing that Jagmohan's detractors—among them Farooq and Rajiv whose handling of Kashmir threatens to be exposed the longer Jagmohan stays on—want is to see him emerge as a hero or a peacemaker.

One of the immediate aims of these forces is to turn the anti-Farooq sentiments in the valley—that had taken on a stridently anti-Indian tone—into an anti-Jagmohan wave. They were partly successful, at least in Srinagar, following the January 20 searches ordered by Farooq's bureaucrats who blamed the excesses against civilians on Jagmohan.

Already National Conference and Congress(I) politicians are describing Jagmohan as a *kafir* sent by Delhi to crush their state—who is quietly showing solidarity with the separatists and supporting their movement. Even Farooq minced no words and publicly referred to the January 21 police action as "a reign of terror and repression".

The long-term strategy is to prevent any kind of pacification and force the Centre and the governor into escalating the draconian police measures that will turn the public even more hostile.

If the politicians can create this atmosphere, they can then go back to the public with the demand that since independence may be a pipe-dream, a political settlement for a lesser evil—the removal of the governor and the reinstatement of Farooq—may be an acceptable compromise for the people of Kashmir.

In this troubled atmosphere, Jagmohan would have scored some success even if he is able to bring the troubles to a manageable level. And in this scenario, administrative abilities and measures can only be the instruments of a larger political goal.

So far, the help promised to Kashmiri separatists from Pakistan has been more fire than smoke, even farcical, as witness the aborted border crossing by 4,000 "liberators" last fortnight. Most of the Islamic world has kept aloof; the superpowers have advised caution.

The major task is to convince Kashmiris that their belief that they will be liberated by Pakistan or any other force is but a visionary ideal and that a recourse to arms and terror is an exercise in suicidal futility. They must be convinced, simultaneously, that there are people and forces in India who want to treat Kashmir, not as a political football for short-term fixes, but as a vital partner in its secular ideals, its progress and development, with the right to choose its government in a fair and free poll.

This is not only Jagmohan's trial by fire but also the V.P. Singh Government's most potent challenge.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

Jagmohan's Warnings

"The situation is fast deteriorating. It has almost reached a point of no return. For the last five days, there have been large-scale violence, arson, firing, hartals, casualties and what not. Things have truly fallen apart. Talking of the Irish crisis, Disraeli had said: 'It is potatoes one day and the Pope next.' This is the position in Kashmir. Yesterday, it was Maqbool Butt; today it is *Satanic Verses;* tomorrow it will be 'repression day'; and day after, it will be something else.

The chief minister stands isolated. He has already fallen—politically and administratively; only constitutional rites remain to be performed. The situation calls for effective intervention. Today may be timely; tomorrow may be too late."

◆

"From May 8 to 13, there have been 14 bomb blasts and six cases of firing and cross-firing. Four persons died and about 20 were injured. A tourist bus was fired upon, and four tourists were injured. The current administrative and political structure has once again proved unequal to the task. During the hartal period, no worthwhile activity has been visible at the political front to counter the move of the subversionists. What is still more worrying is that every 'victory' of subversionists is swelling their ranks, and the animosity is being diverted against the Central authorities. I have indicated my anxiety to the chief minister."

Jagmohan's letters to Rajiv in April and May 1989.

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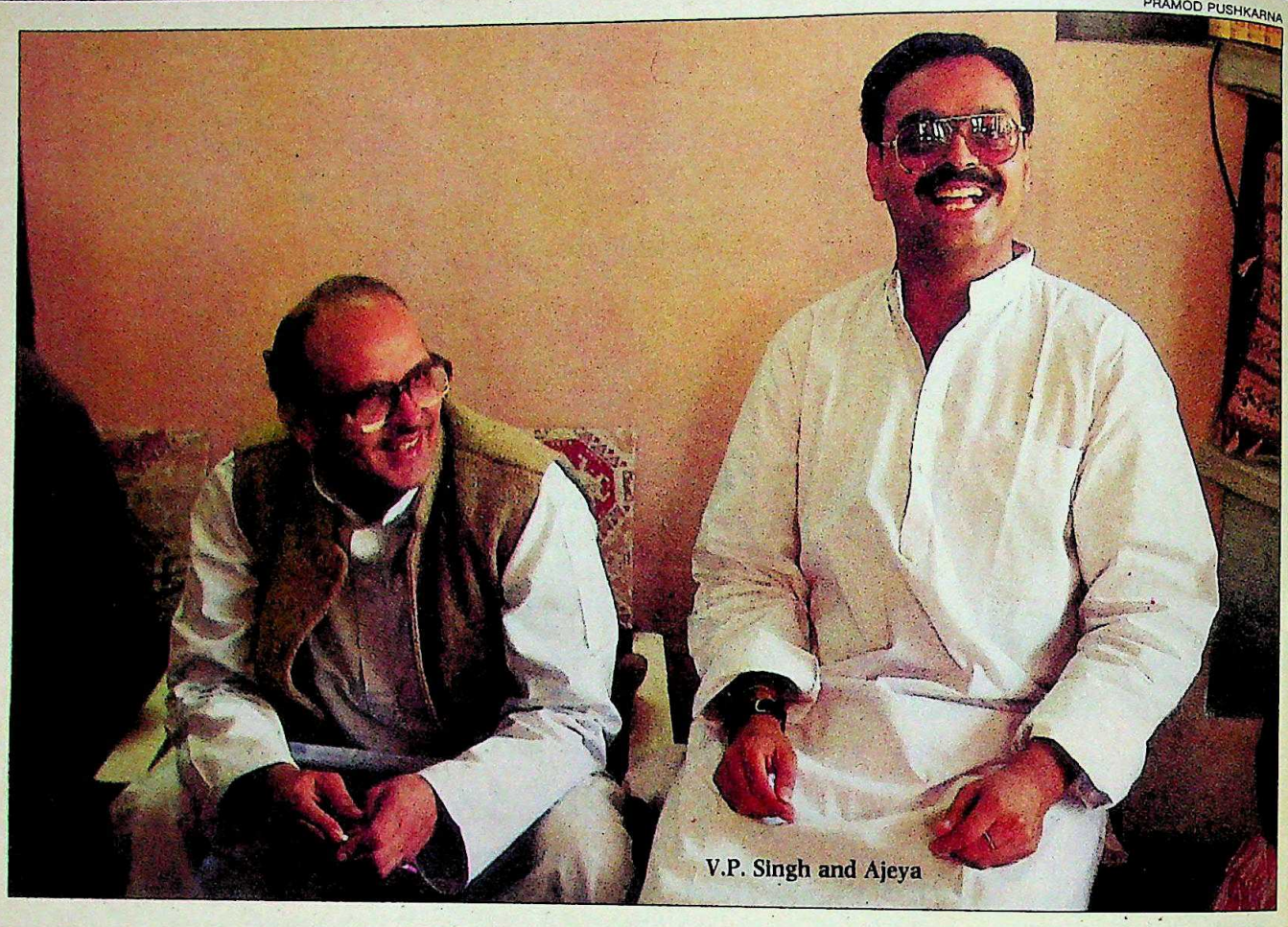
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



V.P. Singh and Ajeya

ST KITTS CONTROVERSY

Calling to Account

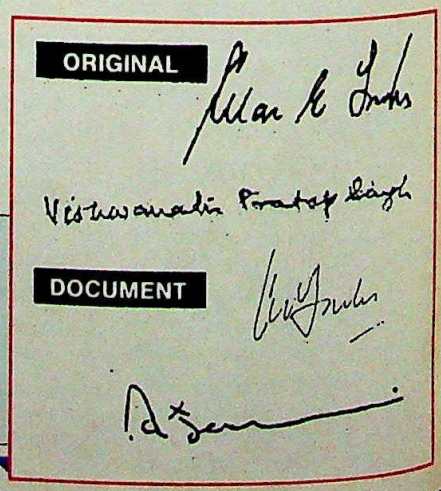
The V.P. Singh Government's investigations into the St Kitts scandal reveal a murky tale of high-level involvement.

WHEN it struck six months ago, the St Kitts scandal had the electrifying effect of a lightning bolt. The charges were devastating: Ajeya Singh, the 33-year-old son of V.P. Singh, held a foreign account in a Caribbean tax haven that went by the unlikely name of St Kitts. And the beneficiary of the $21 million (Rs 35 crore) account was V.P. Singh himself. The scandal threatened to scorch Singh's political career on the eve of his greatest test: the general elections.

Congress(I) leaders and newspapers close to the party seized on the issue. Said the then minister of state for information and broadcasting K.K. Tewary: "V.P. Singh collected this money from private and public sector companies in London while he was finance minister. He collected the bribe and the money was deposited in the bank." And speaking about the documents presented later in Parliament, Eduardo Faleiro, then minister of state for finance, declared: "We have no reason to doubt their genuineness."

Then as suddenly as it had arrived, the

> *"The difficulty... is that the documents received by the directorate are... only photocopies... (making it) difficult to compare and verify the signatures."*
>
> K.L. VERMA, *the then Enforcement Director, to the Finance Ministry*



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> *"The threats came from Larry Kolb... supposedly close to Satish Sharma and Rajiv Gandhi. On October 13, 1989, he telephoned from Florida... asking me rudely who my boss in India was."*
>
> **SHIV KUMAR,** ***Indian High Commissioner in Trinidad and Tobago***

scandal vanished. Lightning bolt it may have been, but the thunder failed to follow. There wasn't even a whimper. Indeed, the Congress(I) seemed strangely eager to forget about it.

Last fortnight, it was evident that the new Government had no intention of letting that happen. It flew a team of officials to the US and sounded the CBI about the case.

The details—as reconstructed from the records of the Finance Ministry and the Directorate of Enforcement and the Government's own investigations—are shocking:

- The entire operation to discredit V.P. Singh was being co-ordinated from New Delhi with the active help of controversial godman Chandraswamy and his disciples at home and abroad.
- Involved in the exercise were the then foreign minister P.V. Narasimha Rao; current Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh; the then prime ministerial aide R.K. Dhawan; former cabinet secretary T.N. Seshan; an additional secretary in the foreign office, Prakash Shah; two journalists based in Delhi; and several middle-level officials.
- Foreign nationals were used to collect so-called evidence against V.P. Singh and his son.
- Direct orders went from the office of the external affairs minister and the finance minister to Indian diplomats in St Kitts and the US to help those foreign nationals involved in collecting the documents.

To many, the Government's findings will only be a confirmation of strong suspicions which were aroused the moment the scandal broke—on August 20-22. Take, for instance, the publications which first reported the scandal—*The Kuwait Times* and *Golze-Adam*, a Turkish newspaper. Neither was known for its keen interest in India. Nevertheless, both put the St Kitts story on their front pages.

AJEYA Singh, both alleged, was operating an account in the First Trust Corporation Ltd, Basseterre, St Kitts. And to back their case, the two newspapers reproduced photostats of documents showing that Ajeya Singh had deposited $21 million in the account whose final beneficiary was his father, V.P. Singh.

Mamaji (left) and Chandraswamy

BHAWAN SINGH

Next day, the story found its way into *The Hindustan Times* and *The Telegraph*, then edited by M.J. Akbar, now a Congress(I) MP—and continued to hog headlines for two weeks. It continued at a lower pitch for a little longer. Then, five weeks before the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress(I) took the issue to Parliament, presenting as proof several documents attested by officials of the Indian Consulate General in New York. Party MPs in both houses followed up by launching a scathing attack on Singh.

The decision to present the documents in Parliament had been taken on October 13 at a meeting held at the parliament office of Dhawan. Others present were the then revenue secretary Nitish Sengupta; the then minister of state for revenue Ajit Panja; the then director of enforcement K.L. Verma; and there was the then joint secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs who is now additional secretary.

Because of objections from some of the officials, the meeting later shifted to Faleiro's room where Shiela Dikshit, former finance secretary Gopi Arora and Seshan also walked in. The move to lay the copy of the documents before Parliament was opposed by the then enforcement director and the finance secretary, according to a note in the relevant file by the new Government. It adds that "the (Rajiv) government, however, took a political decision in the matter and some of the documents were laid on the table of the house".

Earlier, the Rajiv government directed the Enforcement Directorate to investigate the possibility of arresting Ajeya Singh. This move too was opposed by a few senior officials who pointed out that

> *"Kailash Nath Aggarwal (Mamaji) telephoned S.C. Gupta (deputy high commissioner) and practically dictated a letter to him... to send to the prime minister of St Kitts and Nevis."*
>
> **SHIV KUMAR,** ***Indian High Commissioner in Trinidad and Tobago***

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> *"The position... now... is that the documents brought by A.P. Nanday, deputy director (in the Enforcement Directorate), have yet to be verified regarding their authenticity."*
>
> K.L. VERMA *to the Finance Ministry after 1989 General Elections*

the documents had several inaccuracies and that their authenticity was in doubt.

The manner of authentication was also quite questionable. They had been attested only a few days before by the Indian Consul General in New York under pressure from none other than Narasimha Rao.

That became clear last month when R.K. Rai, consul general at New York, was asked to explain his conduct in the episode. In a letter to Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh, Rai wrote that he had been asked to meet Narasimha Rao in his hotel suite in New York on October 4, 1989. Says Rai: "The minister, when I saw him, told me that an official of the Directorate of Enforcement would bring some documents for consular attestation and that I should personally give those attestations."

The official was A.P. Nanday, a deputy director in the Directorate of Enforcement, handpicked to "investigate" the St Kitts account.

On September 29, Nanday left for St Kitts accompanied by a journalist from a Delhi-based daily. According to his report, he visited New York and St Kitts, met George Maclean, a former managing director of the First Trust Corporation, Anne Salvesan and Terence Byron, both associated with the bank, and collected evidence which "proved" that Ajeya Singh was operating an account in it.

He seems to have accomplished all this with laudable efficiency. He was able to track down both Byron and Salvesan within 24 hours of landing in Miami on September 30, 1989.

THEN he flew from Miami to St Kitts, collected statements from both of them, and flew back—all within eight hours. How remarkable the feat is can be judged from the fact that it takes four hours to fly from Miami to Basseterre.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Narasimha Rao with Rajiv Gandhi

Soon after, Nanday arrived at the consulate with the documents which were to be annexed with the statement of Maclean, vouching that Ajeya Singh had an account in the bank.

Under the rules, Indian officials posted abroad are authorised to certify documents and signatures provided the documents are signed in their presence. But in this case, Consul General Rai certified Maclean's signature without meeting him personally. The consulate officials also attested deposit receipts of the bank and copies of the passport of V.P. Singh and his son. The government's statements in Parliament were based on this attestation.

The consulate went a step further. It also attested a statement by Alan Tonks, a director of the First Trust Corporation confirming Ajeya Singh's account. Officials claim it was done in Tonk's presence. But Tonk's signature on the statement of account and on his deposition don't tally. So either the signature on the bank account was a false one or a different Tonk was presented to the Indian officials.

What fouled up Nanday's achievements were a few gaffes. For one, both the letters to Salvesan and Byron and their replies were written on the same typewriter. The replies contain points not raised in Nanday's letters. And both Salvesan and Byron use language which seems a bit odd in distant Basseterre but would have been perfectly in place in a government office in India. A sample: "As to the questions contained in said letter (*sic*) or which you asked me during our interview following are our responses." Incidentally, the text

> *"The minister (Narasimha Rao), when I saw him, told me that an official of the Enforcement Directorate would bring some documents ... and that I should personally attest them."*
>
> R.K. RAI, *Indian Consul General, New York*

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> *"The directorate was also asked to examine whether on the basis of available material, Ajeya Singh could be arrested or prosecuted...(but the directorate) was not in favour of (it)."*
>
> K.L. VERMA *to the Cabinet Secretary*

of the two letters is almost identical.

Maclean too gave a statement to Nanday which displays a predilection for Indian English. In it, he says that he had never met Singh, implying that to open an account it was not necessary for him to meet the account holder or the beneficiary in person.

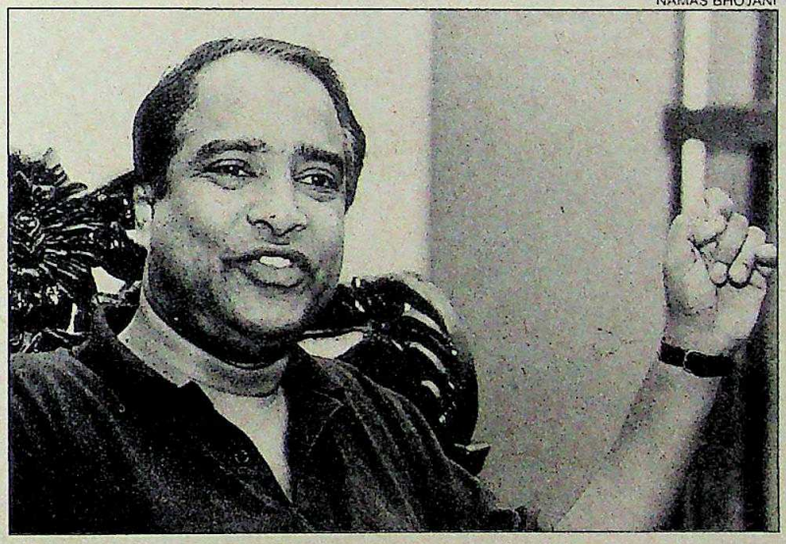
There was another goofup. By the time Nanday met Maclean, account documents had been published with V.P. Singh's signature. Later, Maclean in his statement said he had accepted Singh as beneficiary on the basis of the signature in his passport. A copy of the passport with Singh's signature was attached with his statement as evidence. But he overlooked one point: Singh's signature in the bank's safekeeping agreement is in Hindi while in the passport, it is in English.

Officials of the Directorate of Enforcement are now convinced that the documents were prepared in New Delhi and that Nanday's US visit was a mere formality.

In his "investigations", Nanday appears to have received considerable help from Chandraswamy. Says former enforcement director K.L. Verma in a secret communication to the Finance Ministry after the new Government took over: "Nanday informally informed me that he had met Chandraswamy and Kailash Aggarwal alias Mamaji (Chandraswamy's man Friday) at Miami along with Larry Kolb. I was also informed that they had gone with him to St Kitts and New York."

Chandraswamy, government officials say, even contacted Fairfax Chairman Michael Hershman for help (Incidentally, the Rajiv government had hauled up V.P. Singh for hiring Fairfax to investigate Reliance Industries and Amitabh Bachchan's foreign accounts). Officials say that Chandraswamy coordinated the St Kitts operation from the New York apartment of international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. Khashoggi is now out on bail in New York in a case in which he is said to have helped launder the illegal funds of the late Philippines president Ferdinand Marcos. Chandraswamy, however, has denied the charges in a statement in New York last fortnight.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Faleiro: placed documents in House

The Rajiv government's attempts to indict V.P. Singh did not stop at enlisting the help of Chandraswamy or pliant officials like Nanday. It also arm-twisted a bit, as appears from a letter written to the new Government by Shiv Kumar, India's High Commissioner in Trinidad and Tobago, under whose jurisdiction St Kitts falls.

In his January 19 letter, Kumar says he was pressured by Narasimha Rao, a certain Larry Kolb and the Indian Consulate General in New York to support Chandraswamy's efforts to get documentary evidence against V.P. Singh. Nanday, Kumar writes, called him from New York to say that Larry Kolb ("Rajiv Gandhi's friend") would send him a fax on which "urgent action should be taken". The reason for the urgency: the Parliament session in which the Rajiv government wanted to present evidence was close at hand.

Kumar did receive a fax from Kolb ordering him to write a letter to the St Kitts prime minister asking for help in investigating the case. Kumar alleges that the fax was followed by a call from Kailash Nath Aggarwal who claimed to be a family friend of Narasimha Rao. Apparently, an official communication from Kumar on his letterhead was necessary to get a response from the St Kitts government. Finally, an official of the Indian High Commission did call on Prime Minister Simmonds but was not given any communication, as he had been told to expect. Kolb was furious and upbraided the officials. He went on to write to the Deputy Indian High Commissioner S.C. Gupta: "I hereby advise you to immediately draft and sign a letter to the prime minister along the following lines." The officials declined to obey his orders.

Shortly after came the change in government. And then the process of unravelling began.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

> *"The move to (present) copies of the documents... in the Lok Sabha was opposed by (me) and finance secretary. The Government, however, took a political decision in the matter..."*
>
> K.L. VERMA *to the Finance Ministry*

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HARYANA

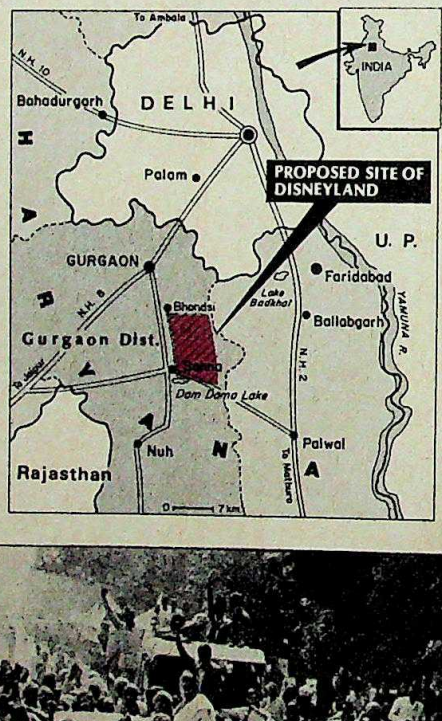
Disneyland Drama

The state Government's move to acquire 14,000 acres of agricultural land for a grandiose amusement park sparks off a furore.

EXTRAVAGANT doesn't even begin to describe it. Imagine a huge constellation of stars and planets soaring overhead. To the right, a theme park containing representative 3-D figures from every country on earth. To the left, whirring gizmos and blinking robot lights in a gigantic science park. A lake full of frolicking water-skiers, with a breathtaking view of a roaring royal Bengal tiger in the adjacent ecological park. A myriad other whirligigs spread riotously across 28,000 sprawling acres. Three luxury hotels and a roof-top revolving restaurant in the background.

That's not the latest phantasmagoria from the West Coast of the US. It's the *desi* Disneyland, a classic fun city that's billed to come up in the rustic outback of tiny Haryana, just a half-hour's drive from the bustling Indira Gandhi International Airport on the Delhi-Haryana border. "The idea is to get off the plane and drive straight into fun city," says S.K. Sharma, secretary, Haryana Tourism.

It could be quite a while, however, before the fun begins. Blocking the way are 1.5 lakh agitating farmers who stand to lose their means of livelihood if the grandiose project materialises. Reason: 14,381 acres of agricultural land is to be acquired by the Government under a notification issued on January 7. Also to be occupied by the amusement park are 3,685 acres of panchayat land and 9,323 acres of rocky land besides the Damdama lake—to be used for water sports—which stretches over 574 acres. Farmers, clearly, are not at all amused by the prospect.



Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala is hell-bent on pushing the project through. The farmers are equally determined to stop it. "Chautala wants to amuse foreigners. We will die but not part with our land," declares a group of farmers. To underline their resolve, they pick up a pinch of soil and smear it on their foreheads. Says another: "Let them open fire. We also know how to use the gun."

It's no empty threat. Residents of the 28 villages which fall under the notification have formed an organisation—the Disneyland Virodhi Kisan Morcha—to oppose the project. On February 7, they descended in their thousands on Prime Minister V.P. Singh's residence. "We will not give up our land," they chorused, refusing to leave until the prime minister heard them out. Finally, they relented but only after Singh rang up Chautala in Chandigarh in their presence and called for the file on the amusement park project.

The amusement park project was con-

Farmers protest outside Singh's residence

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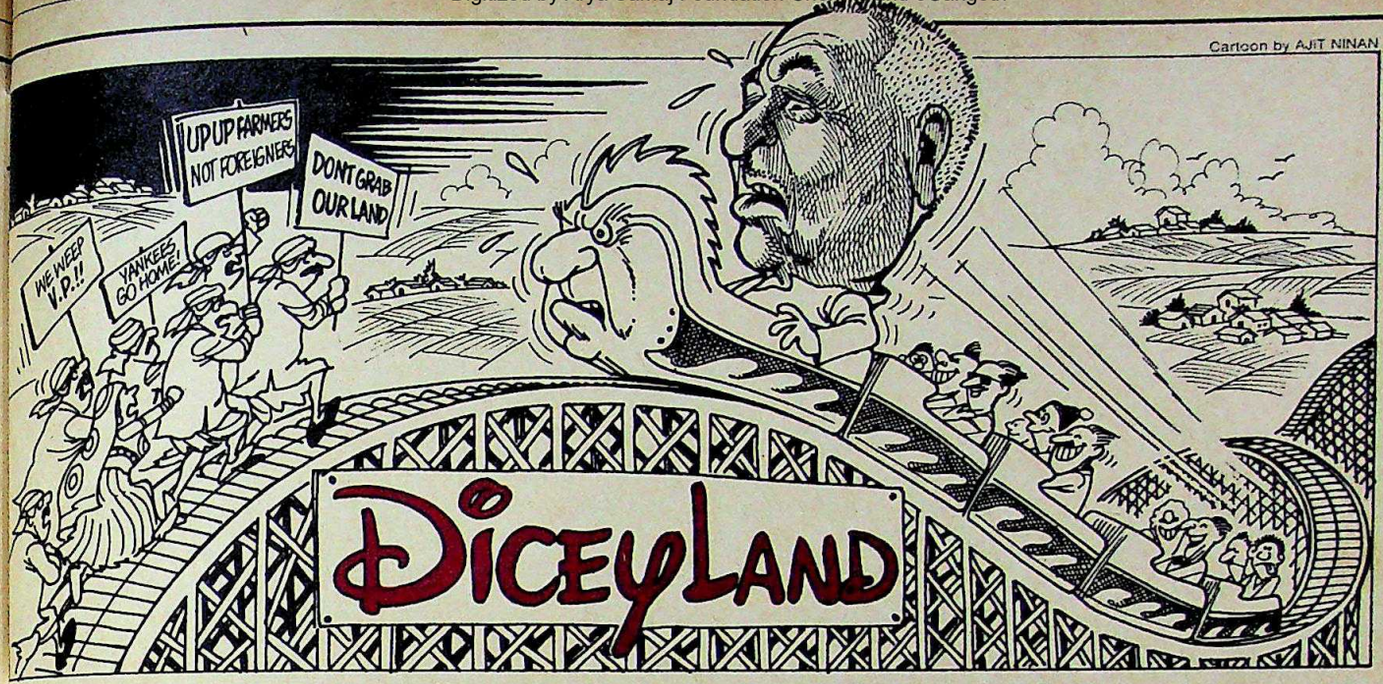

received in 1986 when Bansi Lal was chief minister. At that time, the chosen site was the 10-km stretch between Surajkund and Badhkal lake. Geologists, however, decreed that the soil there was not suitable for putting up roller-coasters and other rides. The hunt for an alternative site ensued, and as Sharma puts it, "geology, mining and industrial advisers all converged on Damdama (the notified area) as the best location".

In May 1989, the Tourism Department even issued global tenders but since the site had not been finalised, the response was tepid. In October 1989, a committee of Haryana Tourism Department officials visited Spain, Hong Kong, Singapore and the US to study amusement parks. On returning, they recommended that a fun city on the lines of the one in Florida be built.

After Chautala took over, matters began to move rapidly. Clearing the amusement project was one of his first acts on assuming office. Shortly thereafter came the land acquisition notice.

"We will safeguard the farmers' interests," Chautala promises. But the farmers are far from being reassured. Says Raja Ram, sarpanch of Rithoj village: "We don't know if Disneyland will come into being but Chautalaland definitely will." Scores of farmers in the 28 villages to be acquired, echo his views. Most of them are Gujjars; only one village, Alipur, is dominated by Jats. All have traditionally voted for the Congress(I). And Chautala, they feel, is now victimising them for their political leanings.

The manner in which the land to be acquired has been selected certainly lends credence to their charge. While land owned by farmers has been systematically notified for acquisition, the big builders from outside who have bought land in the area have been spared.

"Chautala has had a soft spot for colonisers ever since Devi Lal became chief minister of Haryana in June 1987," says Dharampal Khatana, a Gurgaon-based lawyer who is fighting the cases of farmers, helping them file petitions against the notification in the office of the land acquisition collector. Khatana alleges that Chautala has been buying land all over Gurgaon district in the names of friends and relatives and selling it to the big builders.

IN Bhondsi, Vatika Developers and Skippers, builders from Delhi who have purchased land—100 and 250 acres respectively—have escaped the notification. So has Janata Dal leader Chandra Shekhar—who owns a farmhouse—and Maruti Udyog—which has purchased 100 acres of land in Bhondsi. But the rest of the village, where farmers live, is going to be acquired.

Similarly, the village of Mohammadpur Gujar, on both sides of which the Ansals—a Delhi-based building company—have bought land, has been spared. Another village, Neemoth, where, farmers allege, Chautala's relatives own land, has also escaped acquisition. But oddly enough, the villages of Harchandpur and Mandanar, which fall on either side of Neemoth, have been notified for acquisition.

The opponents of the Disneyland project have no intention of taking all this lying down. "It's our turn now to victimise Chautala," says advocate Bhoop Singh Raghav, a member of the nine-member committee formed to provide legal assistance to farmers.

Thousands of farmers filed petitions against the notification before February 7, the last date. The farmers are not very hopeful of the petitions being accepted by the collector. Says Khatana: "He is a representative of the Government."

If the petitions are rejected, then Section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act automatically comes into force whereby the 28,000 acres will be notified as acquired against compensation. The farmers are, of course, in no mood to be pacified by compensation, whatever the amount. If Section 6 comes into force, the Virodhi Morcha plans to block the two entries to the Damdama lake resort.

Still, the fact remains that the compensation likely to be offered is far short of market rates. The compensation will be determined by the average at which sales have been concluded in the area in the recent past. Since in most transactions, a major chunk is paid in black money, the average at present is just Rs 50,000 an acre whereas the market rate is Rs 5 lakh. Builders have, in fact, offered as much as Rs 6 lakh per acre to farmers who had declined the offer because the land is their only means of livelihood.

Meanwhile, the Haryana Government is putting all its efforts into getting the project off the ground. Architects are readying the layout plan and global tenders are being prepared. "The tenders should reach the embassies in a month's time," says Sharma, adding: "Anyone is free to invest. The projects will go to whoever provides the best evaluation and facilities. He can be an Indian, a Cuban or anyone else."

To garner funds, the Government will hawk three hotel sites. "The Government only needs to set aside Rs 10 crore to be paid against compensation," says Chautala. That estimate is questionable.

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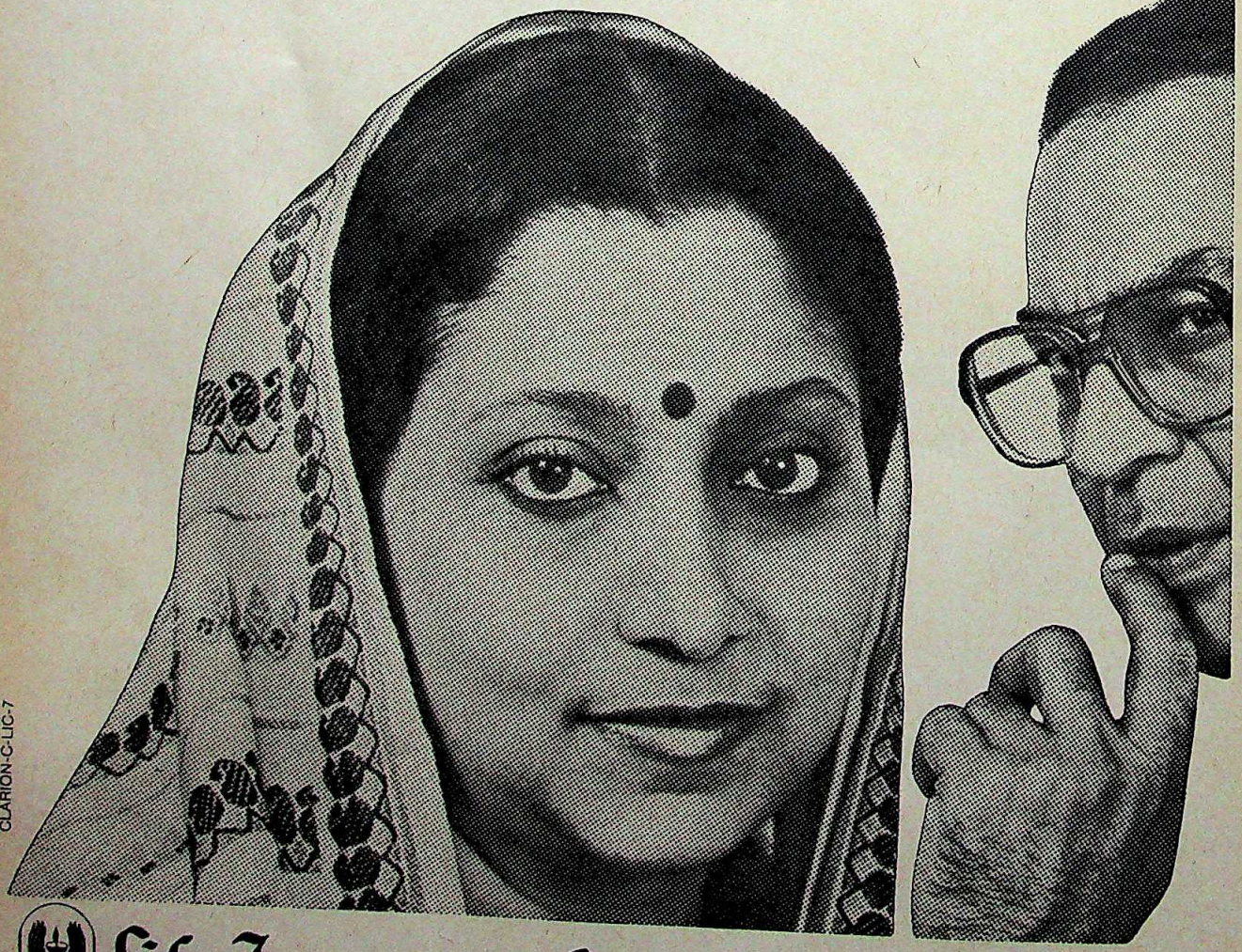

CLARION-C-LIC-7

Life Insurance Corporation of India

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Even if land is acquired at a rate of Rs 50,000 per acre, the Government will have to shell out Rs 140 crore. An aide close to Chautala reveals that the Government is toying with the idea of approaching the World Bank for a loan.

Tourism officials are confident that the project will take off within four months: "Six weeks for investors to respond to the tenders and another six weeks for scrutiny." Chautala is, if anything, more optimistic. "The first section should be ready in a year," he says. He alleges that journalists are "leading a vilification campaign against the project" because some of them own land in the notified areas.

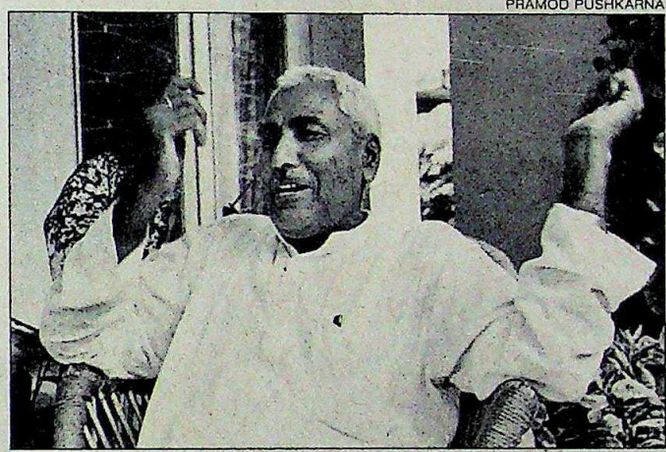
But he could be in for far more opposition than he currently reckons—and not just from journalists. V.P. Singh is said to be opposed to the project though he may not directly seek to stall it because that would antagonise Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal.

More important, Industry Minister Ajit Singh and Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate are likely to do their best to see that the amusement park project does not get off the ground. Ajit Singh, it is learnt, has sent a letter to V.P. Singh arguing that the project, by depriving farmers of their livelihood, negates the right-to-work promise that the Janata Dal made in its manifesto. And Dandavate, whose ministry must approve the foreign exchange requirements for the project, is likely to decide that an amusement park is not a national priority.

The fun and games may begin earlier than Chautala thinks.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA

"It is a simple development project"

CONTROVERSY appears to court Om Prakash Chautala at every turn. If it is not his running battle with his brother, Ranjit Singh, then it is the manner in which he became chief minister of Haryana. But even by his standards, the ruckus over the Disneyland project is remarkable. In an interview with Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU, *Chautala answers opponents of the project. Excerpts:*

Q. ***The US Disneyland occupies 2,000 acres. Why is the Haryana Government acquiring 28,000 acres?***

A. Our amusement park too can be built over 2,000 acres. But more land is required for creating infrastructural facilities—hotels, restaurants, an air strip—for the lakhs of visitors. In India, whenever such a thing is conceived, rich people buy land around it for speculation. The Government has notified a lot of extra land to prevent escalation of prices and also to put an end to fresh registration of sale of agricultural land. But not all land notified for acquisition may actually be acquired.

Q. ***Doesn't your scheme contradict Devi Lal's statement that the Government will commit 50 per cent of the investible resources to the agricultural and rural sectors?***

A. Of the land under acquisition, only 7,421 acres belong to farmers. Our aim is to acquire only that which is absolutely necessary. The affected farmers will be rehabilitated either on agricultural land elsewhere or by providing the maximum monetary compensation possible. There is no contradiction. My government is pro-poor, pro-farmer, pro-tenant and pro-weaker sections.

Q. ***It is alleged that you have exempted land owned by colonisers.***

A. This is propaganda by people who bought land for speculation and who now see it slipping out of their hands. To evade stamp duty, they registered the land at rates lower than what they had paid. There are almost 7,000 acres of such land. Among the owners is Swami Agnivesh, who is making a noise against the project. Some journalists from Delhi who bought land too are involved. Also, some bogus societies were floated. No coloniser will benefit. In fact no coloniser ever met me; corrupt people usually shy away from me.

Q. ***It is said in Gurgaon that whether Disneyland comes up or not, Chautalaland will.***

A. How will Chautalaland come up? By the Government acquiring land for the project? If I wanted to buy land, no one would have stopped me. I have enough land in my ancestral village. It is so illogical. If what people say is correct, that my men and relatives have bought land at the site, then why would I try to acquire it? No relation of mine or any of my "men" has even one *marla* of land in the area.

Q. ***Have you seen the US Disneyland? What convinced you of the need to create one in Gurgaon?***

A. I have seen both Disneyland and Disneyworld. Everything, yes, everything there is magnificent. *Aap dekhte hi rah jaate hain* (you are left gaping). One thing that struck me was that the numerous rides instil boldness in children.

Q. ***Both Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate are reportedly against the project. Will you still go ahead?***

A. Whatever the prime minister and finance minister say will be done. We will review it if they so desire. As I said, it is a simple development project. If it is completed the way we visualise, we shall not need to levy any new tax on the people of the state. This issue of investment by NRIs has been raised by interested people. The tourism development corporation will raise the infrastructure and then the land will be leased for setting up different sections of the amusement park.

Q. ***So come what may, you are going ahead with it?***

A. Development work should never stop. Some people will start this kind of talk through newspapers and stall development. Should we allow a monopoly of newspapers?

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ASSEMBLY POLLS

Crucial Contest

With 1,619 seats up for grabs, the coming assembly elections will determine the direction of the nation's politics for the first half of this decade.

THE February 27 assembly elections will perhaps be the clinching close encounter of the political kind between Prime Minister V.P. Singh and his predecessor Rajiv Gandhi.

While ostensibly, it may not appear as dramatic as the one that so radically altered the nation's internal balance of power last November, it is nothing but a mini general election. In its sweeping dimensions are involved 1,619 seats in eight states and one Union territory. Of these seats, the Congress(I) presently holds 1,081, with the entire opposition having less than 25 per cent.

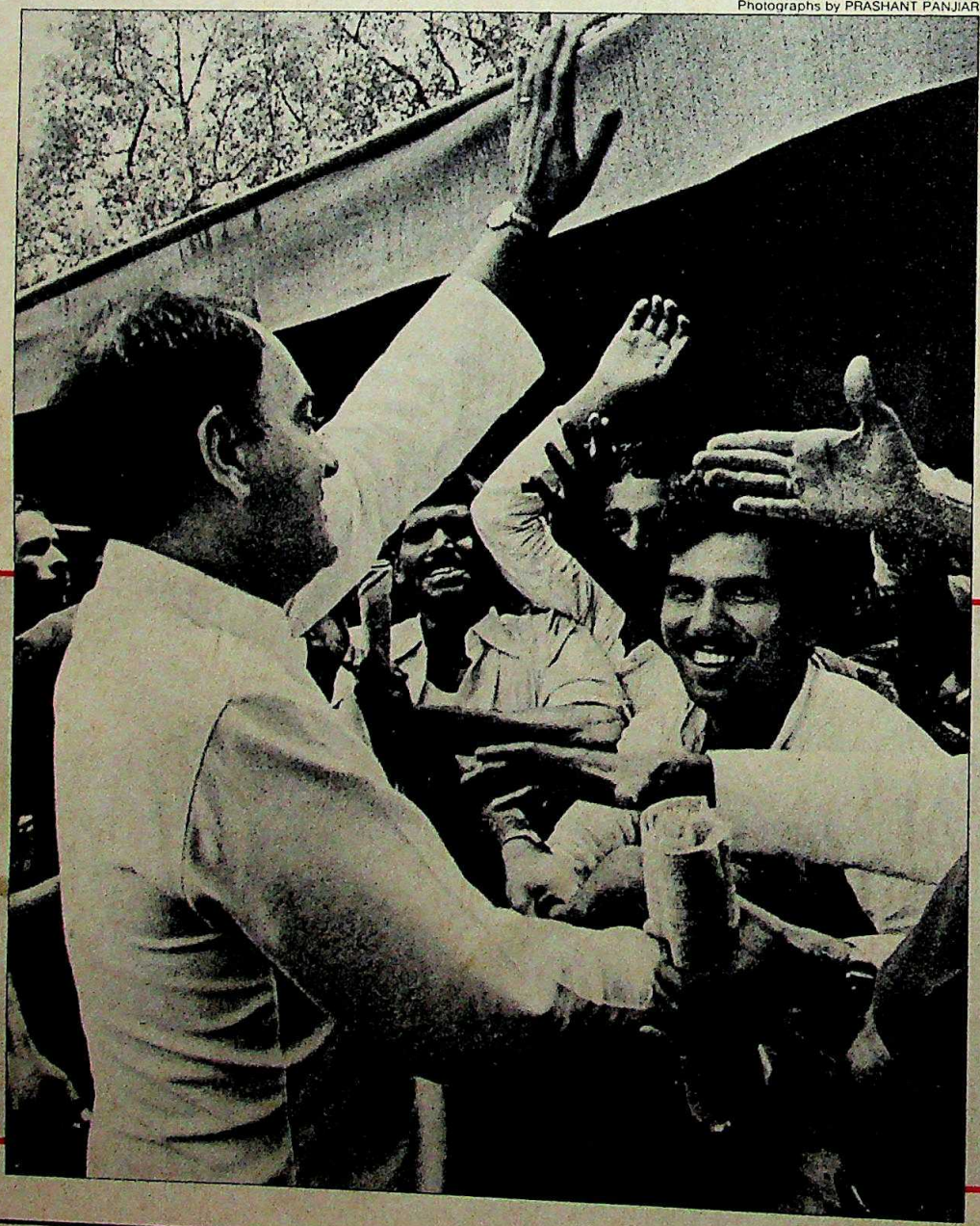
At stake are not just the individual fortunes of the two erstwhile comrades of the Congress culture—whose destinies seem to be inextricably criss-crossed—but also the direction of the nation's politics, politicians and political agenda for the first half of this decade.

There is a qualitative difference between the battle now and the one held in November. Not only are the non-Congress(I) parties less united than they were during the Lok Sabha elections, but they have no single election issue to beat the Congress(I) with. Earlier, it was the slogan of replacing Rajiv Gandhi with V.P. Singh to which the Hindi heartland responded, summarily rejecting Rajiv.

The opposition disunity stems from the aspirations of various contenders for the chief ministership in the Janata Dal. In each of the states going to the polls, the party has at least three claimants for the post of chief minister, and each one has tried to grab the maximum number of nominations for his followers.

As a result, both the Janata Dal and the BJP are facing triangular contests

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



For Rajiv Gandhi, the elections offer an opportunity to correct the mistakes that cost him his prime ministership and prepare for a comeback...

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in Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan. During the Lok Sabha elections, the two parties arrived at 80 per cent seat adjustments in the north. In fact, with the insignificant presence of the left parties in the Hindi heartland, there were greater chances of opposition unity in the assembly polls. But as the date for withdrawal of nominations arrived, it became clear that the BJP and the Janata Dal would be confronting each other for three out of every 10 seats up for grabs, improving the Congress(I)'s electoral chances *(see table)*.

For the Janata Dal, particularly its chief, the elections are an opportunity to demonstrate that V.P. Singh's vote-catching abilities are a permanent attribute of a charismatic leader. But above all, the results will be the first referendum on the performance of India's first minority government and the contradictory alignment of forces on which it is perched.

Though the assembly polls are fought largely on local issues, Singh's role as the deliverer for his party will be put to test again. If he fails, his party's success in the November elections will be interpreted simply as a negative vote against the Congress(I). Apart from giving a boost to the Congress(I), it is likely to generate a sense of enervation in his party. Besides, the country's second experiment with the multi-party system—after the earlier Janata fiasco—will suffer a rude jolt right at the beginning.

For the battered Congress(I) and its beleaguered leader, on the other hand, the elections are a straw to clutch on to in the hope of rekindling political clout.

FOR Rajiv, personally, it represents a heaven-sent opportunity for mid-course corrections of mistakes that may have cost him his prime ministership. And for better or for worse, he has taken the plunge. Taking a page out of the last general elections, he has attempted to use it to better his chances. Lesson number one: it was a verdict for change. And so, change there must be.

This time around, Rajiv has ushered in change through the Congress(I) Parliamentary Board. Under his leadership, he has forced it to field a large number of new faces for the assembly elections. So much so that even sitting MLAs—in whose assembly segments the party trailed by over 10,000 votes in the Lok Sabha elections—were not renominated.

As a result, a majority of the legislators have been denied tickets. In Madhya Pradesh, of the 250 party MLAs, as many as 124 have been replaced. In Rajasthan 49 sitting MLAs, including six ministers of the Harideo Joshi Government, have not been renominated. In Orissa, J.B. Patnaik, the all-powerful chief minister till the other day, has been denied a ticket. And despite his best efforts, the formidable Patnaik could not ensure tickets for his family members or proteges.

Perhaps, this massive house cleaning was a risk Rajiv could have profitably taken during the general elections when his word was the law, his image within the

...while for V.P. Singh, they will be both a test of his charisma and vote-catching abilities and a referendum on the performance of his government.

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party relatively unassailable, and the political horizons hazy with doubt. For every risk there is a time. And victory, they say, unites, defeat divides. As election eve approached, unexpected schisms began to rock Rajiv's party.

In Maharashtra, as Chief Minister Sharad Pawar tilted the candidate list heavily in favour of his own followers, a large number of party leaders and workers revolted in protest. Worse, their wrath was directed against Rajiv himself. Former deputy chief minister Nasikrao Tirpude and party veteran Rafiq Zakaria quit the party and joined the Janata Dal. Said Zakaria: "The leadership of Rajiv Gandhi is in disarray everywhere. As a result the Congress(I) is disintegrating fast, there is no hope for its survival."

What began as a trickle of disgruntled leaders quitting the party, turned out to be a veritable exodus. In Bihar, former chief minister Abdul Ghafoor resigned from the Congress(I), ascribing the growing frustration in the party to the "conceit and arrogance of the leader". There was also trouble in Madhya Pradesh where the new axis of Chief Minister S. C. Shukla, Madhavrao Scindia and Motilal Vora accommodated their own supporters at the cost of the Arjun Singh group. Already a large number of sitting MLAs are in the fray as independents.

Realising the helplessness of the central leadership, the chief ministers threatened to begin steering their own course. Says a Rajasthan leader close to the chief minister: "If we have to fight the elections on our own without support from Delhi, then the list should also be ours." It seemed as if Rajiv Gandhi could not have bargained for worse.

Obviously, the reason for the backlash lay in the lack of qualitative change in his style of functioning. His strategy seemed more the result of a tactical change, of his penchant for cussed one-upmanship rather than born out of introspection. After all, those advising him were the same bumbling quick-fixers who led the party to disaster in the general elections. One-line pundits and glib thinkers like Mani Shankar Aiyar and M.J. Akbar. Old machine backroom boys like R.K. Dhawan and M.L. Fotedar. Discredited buddies like Satish Sharma. It was the same old story.

But if the assembly polls seem to spell trouble for Rajiv, they are also causing V.P. Singh moments of acute trepidation. Some of the contradictions that asserted themselves when the Janata Dal was being cemented together—which resurfaced during ticket-giving time before the November elections—are once again threatening to muddy the political waters.

In Rajasthan, for example, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal has ensured nomination for as many as 10 of his family members. In Bihar, a prominent associate of Jayaprakash Narayan, Shiv Nandan Tiwari, whose name was cleared by the party parliamentary board for nomination, was finally vetoed by Chandra Shekhar personally. He has remained in the fray as a rebel. In the face of such factional feuds, Singh was once again compelled to play leader, appeaser and balancer, all at the same time.

AND the role has been a crucial one going by what happened in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Here, units of the party, apparently in a suicidal frame of mind, initially refused to have any adjustment with the BJP and wanted to go it alone. V.P. Singh personally intervened to see that the non-Congress(I) vote did not split. He resorted to the old withdrawal-of-the-raja trick. He clearly told the Rajasthan Janata Dal leaders that he would not campaign in the state unless seat adjustments took place. Then he sent a special plane to bring the Gujarat party leader Chimanbhai Patel to Delhi to work out an adjustment formula even as both the BJP and the Janata Dal had announced full lists.

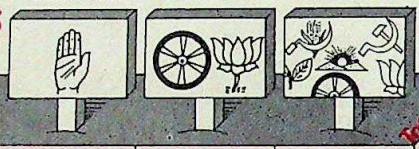
Singh has been keen to repeat the strategies that paid off during the general election. For this reason, he wanted to keep the corruption issue alive. Significantly, the CBI initiative in trying to unearth names of Bofors kick-back recipients coincided with the timing of the assembly polls. And party leaders make no bones about this. Says party General Secretary Yashwant Sinha: "This time we will highlight a lot of local Bofors scandals. We will be campaigning as much against Rajiv Gandhi as against the Jagannath Mishras."

Knowing fully well that the Hindu vote is still with the BJP, Singh wants to ensure that he retains his rapport with the Muslims. And in this regard, he accomplished a remarkable feat when he managed to persuade the sadhus of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple lobby to postpone their plan to begin construction by four months.

This he accomplished through a highly-publicised appeal urging that in view of the mounting tension on the Indo-Pakistan border, the proposed construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple be deferred. Displaying his political acumen, he hinted that the temple plan would clash with national interests. As a result, the VHP leadership was left with no option but to postpone the February 14 deadline. The message wasn't lost on the Muslims: V.P. Singh had protected their interests.

In another shrewd move, he also encouraged defections from the Congress(I) to his fold. Sunil Shastri, who had fought him in the Allahabad by-election in 1988, joined the Janata Dal. Earlier in Maharashtra, former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale and Shalinitai Patil joined the party. In his bid to keep his personal popularity among

POLITICAL ALLIANCES (No. of Seats)



	CONG. (I)	JD-BJP ALLIANCE	MULTI-CORNER CONTEST	Total Seats
Arunachal Pradesh	60		60	60
Bihar	324	84	240	324
Gujarat	182	136	46	182
Himachal Pradesh	68	68		68
Madhya Pradesh	320	300	20	320
Maharashtra	288		288	288
Orissa	147	83	64	147
Pondicherry	30		30	30
Rajasthan	200	160	40	200

Unlike in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP and the Janata Dal will be confronting each other for three out of every 10 seats.

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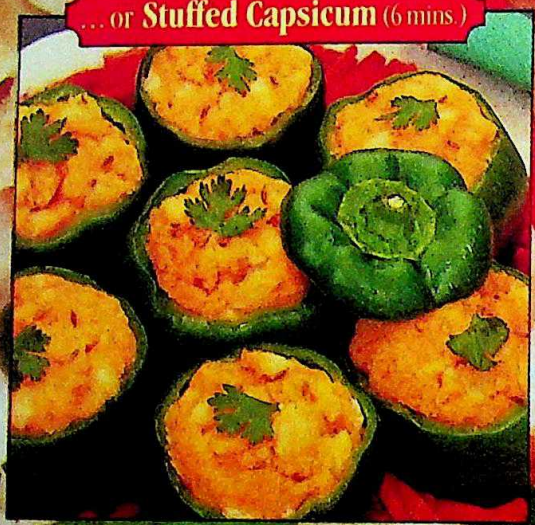
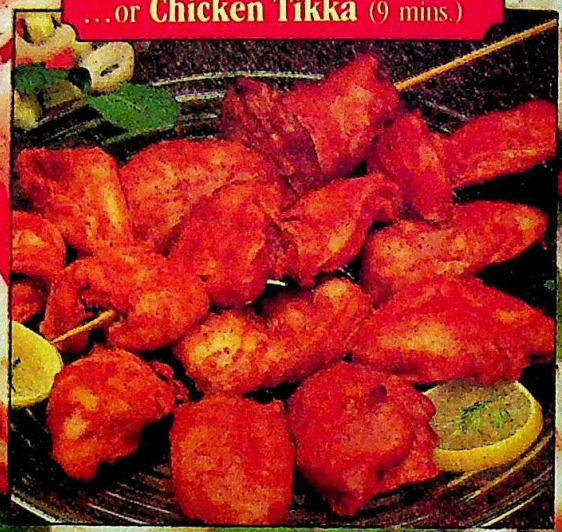
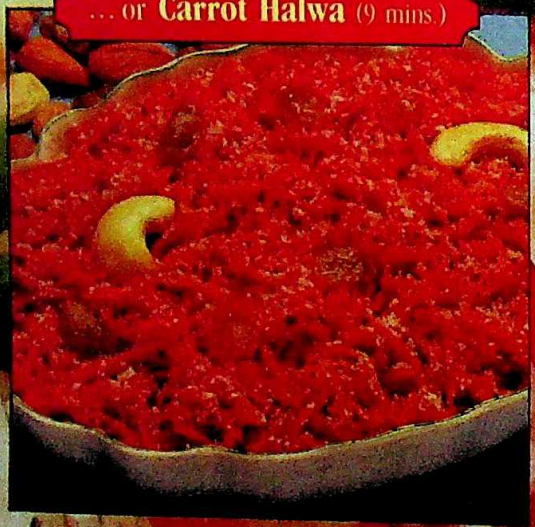


...or **Chicken Tikka** (9 mins.)



...or **Carrot Halwa** (9 mins.)



...or **Pineapple Cake** (9 mins.)

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Muslims intact, he personally urged Zakaria to join the Janata Dal. Ghafoor too gave him a clean chit so far as guarding Muslim interests is concerned.

Finally, Singh is trying to highlight the difference between his down-to-earth approach and Rajiv's high-flying style. While the Congress(I) has chartered a plane for Rajiv's campaign, Singh has decided to travel mostly by car.

In the final analysis, both protagonists seem to have been caught in the cleft. While the Congress(I) rout may unleash a new campaign against Rajiv within the party, possibly leading to a split, the poor performance of the Janata Dal can erode Singh's authority, rendering an image of him as a mere puppet in the hands of the BJP and the left, the two props of his government. The real winner in that case will be the BJP for which these elections are a passage from the wings to centrestage.

—BHASKAR ROY

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Pitching for Power

The right-wing party is confident of making giant gains

WITH assembly elections around the corner, the BJP—which lassoed an unprecedented 86 seats during the Lok Sabha elections and emerged a formidable kingmaker—is now set to explode into a powerful new dimension. In what could prove to be the most significant political development of the new decade, it now awaits its coronation in a number of state capitals to emerge as the new superpower of Indian politics.

Party President L.K. Advani is confident that the BJP will install chief ministers in five states where it will form governments on its own and emerge the dominant power in northern and western India. And this determination was reflected in the confidence with which the BJP went about hammering out seat adjustments with the Janata Dal.

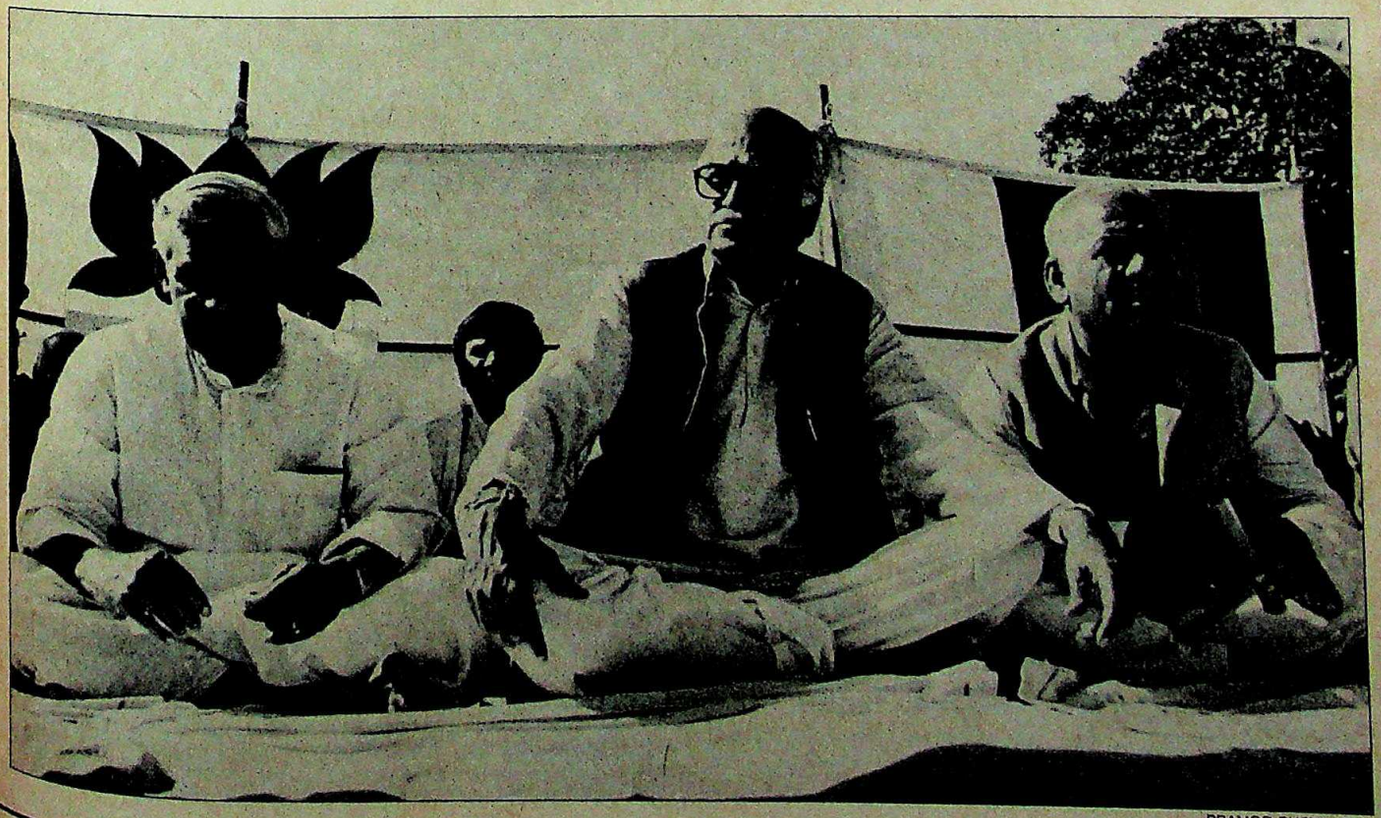
Along with Advani, leaders like Kushabhao Thakre, Murli Manohar Joshi, Sunder Singh Bhandari, Govindacharya and Kailashpati Mishra planned the party's strategy vis-a-vis the Janata Dal with one clear goal: the BJP, in its own strongholds like Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh, would try to capture power independent of its ally's support while trying to avoid a split in the non-Congress(I) vote by making liberal seat concessions in states like Bihar and Orissa *(see map)*.

This time its strategy was not to bend backwards to accommodate the Janata Dal as it had done in November last. So confident is the BJP that it is not even afraid of losing out in three-cornered contests.

While it hopes to gain an absolute majority on its own in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, it may share power with the Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat. In Maharashtra, the BJP-Shiv Sena combine is a strong contender for power. And in the Union territory of Delhi, where polls will take place later, the BJP is likely to sweep them. Its strength in the Rajya Sabha is also likely to increase substantially as a consequence of its poll performance.

The BJP has already begun to plan its future as a stable, mainstream, mass-based party. A new membership drive (it already boasts 3 million members) is to be accompanied by organisational elections which will see a new leadership

Vajpayee, Advani, Khurana at a rally



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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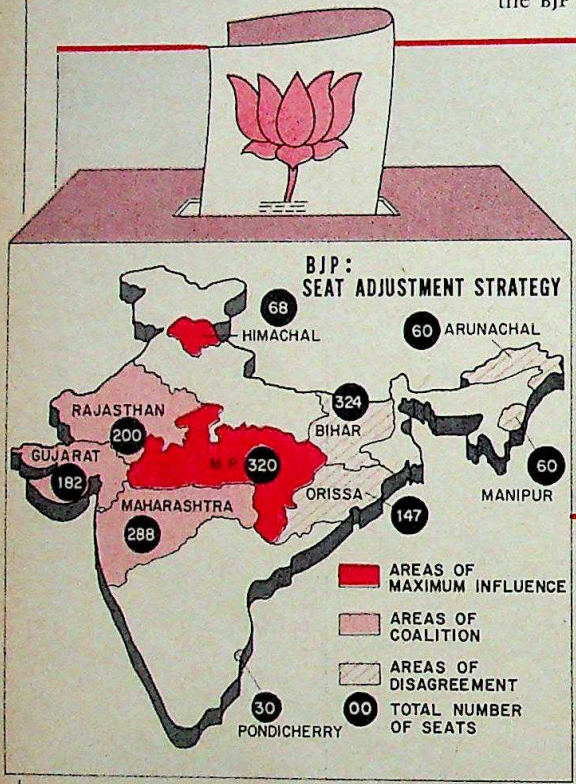
emerge. Unlike most other parties, the BJP plans to enforce norms and discipline with ruthless rigidity. Twenty per cent of the party's present office-bearers at all levels are going to be replaced.

The ultimate aim? As party general secretary and ideologue Murli Manohar Joshi puts it: "We are making steady progress and a stage may come when we will be the dominant force in the country." The BJP's aspiration may not be an empty boast. In May 1986, Advani charted a new course for the party—its thrust on reinforcing its ideological distinctiveness. "If you strongly believe in something, you must not be apologetic," Advani recalls.

Also, for the first time the BJP made a serious effort to spread its influence among farmers. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, the party's newly formed Kisan Cell launched the *"karza mukti"* (waiving of loans) agitation which evoked tremendous response from the farmers.

But most important, the party began to mend fences with its parent organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The success of this strategy, the revival of the Hindu factor, was evident as RSS cadres worked for the BJP during the last elections and will also do so in the assembly elections.

The gulf between the BJP's two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1984 and its present 86 seats was covered, according to party strategists, with an increase of a mere 5 per cent of votes. This crucial 5 per cent rise, says party General Secretary Sundar Singh Bhandari, could be attributed to the party's organisational work and to the 'emotional buildup' on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. And the party, with the support of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), will capitalise on this issue during the assembly elections. Says VHP Working President Vishwa Hari Dalmia: "We created the Hindu wave and the BJP capitalised on it by playing the Hindu card."



Map by B.K. SHARMA

The BJP strategy was not to bend backwards to accommodate the Janata Dal as in November, underestimating its own strength.

Party ideologues, however, are at pains to put the electoral success in a much larger perspective. For them the BJP-Hindu revival is an 'assertion of India's identity as a nation.' Joshi puts forward an interesting thesis. According to him, since Independence under Nehru's leadership, the Indianness of the nation was deliberately neglected. "The institutions of the Nehruvian model were a carbon copy of the western democracies and not suited to the genius of this country," he argues.

After the initial euphoria, people began to get disillusioned and a search for an alternative model and philosophy started. As a part of this quest began the process of emphasising the country's distinctiveness. "The movement for restoring Ram, revered as *'maryada purushottam'* (quintessential man) to full glory was simply a manifestation of this new awareness," Joshi believes. For his school of thought, the BJP rise has an international dimension too. Says Joshi: "Across the globe a search is on for an alternative and we feel at this moment we have much to offer."

Whether the BJP's success reflected a new awakening or mere electoral arithmetic is a question future events will answer. But right now, the party is on a venture to extend the border of its saffron territory.

—BHASKAR ROY

MAHARASHTRA

Tough Tussle

BJP-Shiv Sena axis formidable

THE contestants are many, the field is a melee. The tournament promises to be a riotous one. And the result? It's anybody's guess.

As campaigning for the February 27 assembly polls in Maharashtra hots up, observers predict a hung assembly. Reason: a majority of the 288 constituencies are witnessing four-cornered contests—between the Congress(I)-Republican Party of India (RPI) alliance, the Sena-BJP combine, the Janata Dal-led front and the Maharashtra Indira Congress (MIC) made up of Congress(I) rebels. To further confound the confusion, the majority faction of the RPI led by Prakash Ambedkar and rebels from the Shiv Sena and the BJP are contesting several seats.

Every party has been handicapped by dissidence. But the party most crippled by rebels is the ruling Congress(I). The MIC formed of Congress(I) rebels claims to have fielded nearly 200 candidates. The rebels may not win more than a dozen seats but they could eat substantially into the Congress(I) vote.

Tables by RAJEEV MADAN

Number of seats:	288
Total electorate:	4,71,87,773
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	162
Congress(S)	54
Janata Party	20
BJP	16
Others	36

Much of the dissent was caused by the manner in which Chief Minister Sharad Pawar selected candidates. Pratibha Patil, till recently president of the PCC(I),

ZANY DEMANDS

Kalki Gaur who claims to have been a commodities broker in the US, got a thousand votes in the last elections with some catchy slogans. This time he has plastered walls in the Colaba constituency with zany demands like "Annex Tibet" and "Try Rajiv for Treason". Will Colaba voters see reason ?

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Pawar and Thackeray: arch rivals

predicts a debacle for the Congress(I) because of the wrong distribution of tickets. Patil is one of many who failed to get a ticket, but she continues to remain with the party—so far.

However, two other senior leaders—former ministers Nasikrao Tirpude and Dr Rafiq Zakaria—decided it was time to quit. Both had been first offered seats and then sidelined after hectic lobbying in New Delhi. The names of four ministers, including Industry Minister Ramrao Adik, also did not figure in the initial list. Said a veteran Congressman: "This is a deliberate attempt to humiliate us. The high command has surrendered to the chief minister, who alone is responsible for disrupting party unity in order to retain his post by hook or by crook."

Zakaria and Tirpude charged that more than half the party's candidates belonged to Pawar's group while an overwhelming number were Marathas. The interests of other state leaders were sacrificed, while three potential challengers to Pawar for chief ministership—Patil, Adik and Tirpude—were kept out. At an emotional press conference, Tirpude, a veteran leader from the Vidarbha region, announced that he had met Prime Minister V.P. Singh and was joining the Janata Dal. Attacking Rajiv Gandhi for his indecisiveness, he declared: "The Congress(I) has no future with the present leadership."

For the Congress(I), these are ominous developments. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, it won just 28 of the 48 seats while the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, which had none earlier, won 14 seats. More to the point, the ruling party lost nearly 6 per cent of the vote compared to the previous Lok Sabha election. And since traditionally, the party has always won more votes in parliamentary elections, March could well see a change of government in the state.

But the discontent preceding the assembly polls was not confined only to the Congress(I). Both the Shiv Sena and the BJP too have had their share of rebels. But the Sena rebellion is more serious, with an influential group of party workers breaking away in the Marathwada region in protest against the ticket distribution. Fissures also developed within the Hindu alliance—a pro-RSS organisation criticised Sena chief Bal Thackeray for his digs at the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the reservation policy.

The Janata Dal may well put up a better performance than in the Lok Sabha poll though it too has not been free of dissidence. Partymen demonstrated outside its state headquarters in protest against the ticket distribution.

As the campaign moves into its final phase, it is beginning to resemble a stampede. While the result seems uncertain, most party leaders are predicting one thing: before a new government is sworn in, there will be a lot of horse-trading.

—M. RAHMAN

MADHYA PRADESH

Complex Field

Split in anti-Congress(I) votes

AMONG all the states going to the polls this month, nowhere is the election going to be as complex and bitterly fought as for the 320 assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh. There are basically three fronts in the fray—the Congress(I) contesting all the seats, the BJP fighting 270 seats, the Janata Dal and its left allies in 137 seats; and the dark horse, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which is fighting 191 seats. With the Janata Dal and the BJP candidates fighting each other in 65 constituencies and the BSP emerging as a significant factor, having won 4.24 per cent of the votes in the Lok Sabha elections, much of the anti-Congress(I) votes will get split.

Moreover, statistics also show that the Congress(I) is not in such a bad shape after all. Not only did it get 30 per cent of the votes and lead in 78 assembly segments, it also finished second in 217 other segments in the general elections. And in 38 constituencies its margin of defeat was less than 5,000 votes. So, a multi-cornered contest can certainly help the Congress(I) in many of these constituencies. "In 1977 we found it difficult to get candidates to contest the Vidhan Sabha elections. But this time there is a virtual scramble for tickets," says Chief Minister Shyama Charan Shukla reflecting the optimism in the party. Adds MPCC(I) chief Arjun Singh: "The situation is not hopeless."

The crucial factor then will be how well the BJP-Janata Dal opposition is able to manage to consolidate the anti-Congress(I) votes. The performance of the united opposition in the past has been impressive. In 1977 the Janata Party won 38 out of the 40 parliamentary seats and in the Lok Sabha poll last November the Janata Dal-BJP combine won 32 of the 39 seats which went to the polls. In 1984, on the other hand, a completely fragmented opposition drew a blank despite getting 35 per cent of the votes.

Number of seats	320
Total electorate	3,75,95,559
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	250
BJP	58
Janata Party	5
Others	7

The Janata Dal and the BJP are involved in a game of one-upmanship. The Janata Dal strategy is to garner all the pro-National Front votes that will otherwise go to the BJP. They would much rather prefer a coalition government in which they have the major role, supported by the non-Congress(I) parties. Thus, the Janata Dal is contesting 27 seats

CRIMINAL TASTE

Notable among independent candidates in Madhya Pradesh is Ashok Vir Vikram Singh alias Bhaiya Raja, 39, with 32 criminal cases against him, now in the Nainital jail in connection with a murder which took place in the farmhouse of Akbar 'Dumpy' Ahmed. Those who have heard of his bloody ways and pet pythons can take revenge through the ballot box but many who believe in the bullet will back him.

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that it had earlier left for the BJP.

The BJP has been hit by unprecedented dissension within its ranks because stalwarts like former chief minister V.K. Saklecha, Rajendra Dharakar, Ramhit Gupte and Naresh Johari were denied tickets. Former state party chief Shiv Prasad Chanpuria has quit the national executive in protest against the "dominance of one group" in the list. And the newly-elected saffron-clad MP from Khajuraho, Uma Bharati, threatened to resign, thereby forcing the party to change six candidates at the last minute. Says Sunderlal Patwa, state party chief: "The pressure for tickets is understandable in view of the feeling that the party is coming to power."

S.C. Shukla, V.C. Shukla and Patwa

The Congress(I)'s situation is no better. One hundred and twenty one of its 247 sitting MLAs have been denied tickets giving rise to a wail of protest especially from those in the Arjun Singh group including Ramashankar Singh, Vishnu Rajoria and Bansilal Dhritlahre. Says Dhritlahre: "Shukla was out of active politics for 12 years and he knows nothing of political undercurrents."

The Janata Dal which has electoral understandings with the left parties in 22 constituencies does not have a well-defined campaign. Says V.C. Shukla, state Janata Dal chief: "In these constituencies our local units will decide whom to support, the BJP or the left."

With all their problems, the Congress(I) and the BJP seem to be evenly placed. The BJP might not get the votes of the minorities this time and is banking on its impressive organisational network to mobilise votes. The other contenders are all too aware that once such a cadre-based party comes to power, it will not be easy to dislodge it.

—N.K. SINGH

BIHAR

Rebels Galore

Dissidence hits all parties

THE three major contenders for the 324 seats at stake in the Bihar Assembly elections have spent so much time brawling over tickets that they have very little fire-power left to aim at each other during the campaign.

All the parties had to fly in senior leaders from the Centre to douse the flames of rebellion. The BJP seemed to be the worst hit by this pre-poll bickering and its state President Inder Singh Namdhari publicly accused the national Vice-President Vijaye Raje Scindia of having im-

Number of seats	**324**
Total electorate	**5,36,00,000**
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	196
Lok Dal	46
BJP	16
Janata Party	13
Others	53

MEHAM

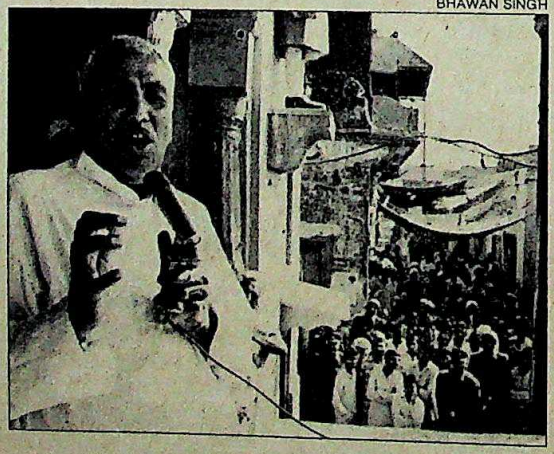
Sticky Wicket

DEVI Lal's Vijay Rath—on which he romped home victorious from two Lok Sabha constituencies recently—is today on a rickety drive with his son, Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, at the wheel.

Pitted against rebel Janata Dal candidate Anand Singh Dangi in the by-election to the Jat-dominated Meham assembly constituency in Rohtak, Chautala, who has to be elected within six months of taking over as chief minister, is on shaky ground.

For one, Dangi, who belongs to Madina village, is a local candidate. Then, as in-charge of Devi Lal's election campaign in Meham—from where Devi Lal won with thumping margins in 1982, 1985 and 1987—Dangi has cultivated grassroots contacts, no less aided by the fact that as chairman of the Haryana Subordinate Services Selection Board he recruited thousands from the area. Most important, Dangi claims the support of Meham Chaubisi, the influential Jat panchayat of 24 villages (the constituency has 30 villages).

BHAWAN SINGH



Chautala: no cakewalk

With the Chaubisi traditionally backing a candidate of its choice, both candidates are desperate to muster its support. At a meeting at the historic platform, Chabootra, Dangi was reportedly extended support. Chautala's supporters, however, dispute the claim saying panchayat procedures were not followed. According to them, the 'real' panchayat presided over by the 'leader' of the Chaubisi, Surat Singh, chose Chautala as the nominee.

Notwithstanding the controversy, Chautala presents an optimistic front. Says he: "I decided to contest from Meham to fulfil the express wish of the people." Declares his election in-charge, M.S. Lather, MP: "We will win hands down on the basis of our policies and work."

But jitters are evident in the Chautala camp. Three-fourths of the Haryana Cabinet—including Home Minister Sampat Singh and Transport Minister Dharamvir Singh—is camping in the constituency. Chautala himself is taking no chances. During a three-day whirlwind tour of the constituency atop the Vijay Rath, Chautala told the villagers: "I will make Meham a model of development for the country." Adding pointedly: "If you elect me, there will not be a single jobless person in this constituency."

The Janata Dal is also raking up a murder case registered against Dangi's brother two years ago. Says Dangi: "The case was false. Such tactics will not work." But obviously Chautala is not going to stop trying.

—KANWAR SANDHU in Meham

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Mishra and Surajdeo: controversies

posed her nominees on the state. To make matters worse the party allotted tickets to two aspirants who had been refused tickets by the Congress(I) and it also fielded Mrityunjay Mishra, the elder brother of Jagannath Mishra. Said a BJP worker: "It is sad to find the Congress(I) culture invading the party."

The situation in the Congress(I) was no better. A group of the party's sitting MLAs who were denied tickets threatened to hold a rally and BPCC(I) chief Tariq Anwar—none of whose nominees were given tickets—issued a statement expressing unhappiness at the choice of candidates and declared he would not campaign.

In the Janata Dal camp too the flag of rebellion was unfurled after all the tickets were given out. Senior leader Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav, MP, threatened not to allow Devi Lal and Ajit Singh to campaign in north Bihar. Complained Yadav: "The Central leaders have connived with Jagannath Mishra because in the Brahmin-dominated areas of Darbhanga and Madhubani, the Janata Dal has not nominated a single Brahmin." Said another disgruntled leader, Saryu Roy: "The Janata Dal has surprisingly failed to nominate a single Muslim in Patna, Bhojpur, Nalanda, Gaya and Jehanabad."

If some leaders fought for tickets on the basis of caste, a few jousted for and against criminal elements. The presence of candidates with dubious track records like Vijayendra Gope, Dilip Singh, Surajdeo Singh and Vishnudev Chaudhary in the Janata Dal list was justified by state party leader Laloo Prasad Yadav who felt that no one is a criminal until convicted by the Supreme Court. On the other hand, Hukumdeo Yadav has decided to work for the defeat of Janata Dal candidates who have a criminal record. To top it all, a group of socialists quit the party and decided to contest on behalf of the Socialist Party (Lohia).

The Janata Dal's Central leaders compounded the problem by insisting on their nominees. Chandra Shekhar, for instance refused to agree to Shivanand Tiwari for the Shahpur seat. The reason: Tiwari had attacked him for his links with mafia elements Surajdeo Singh and Tapeshwar Singh. So a lightweight, Narendra Tiwari, was nominated and Shivanand vowed to fight as an independent. Maneka Gandhi insisted on fielding a Sanjay Vichar Manch colleague, Ranjan Prasad, for the Patna central seat, ruling out the claims of Jabir Hussain, a respected academic. Said Hussain: "It is time we decided what kind of assembly we want. Shall we have an assembly of murderers or saner elements?"

What added to the confusion in the anti-Congress(I) front was the futile attempt at seat adjustment. The Janata Dal which won 31 of the 54 Lok Sabha seats in November finally released a list for 236 seats, the BJP is determined to contest around 200 seats, the CPI 120 seats, the CPI(M) 10, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the Indian People's Front 70 seats each. The JMM which has 14 seats now, could block the BJP's intrusion into the south Bihar Chhotanagpur plateau.

In spite of the rebellion within, the Janata Dal hopes to cash in on the pro-V.P. Singh climate on the national political scenario but is hampered by the fact that it hasn't thrown up any leader who can match the charisma of the late Karpoori Thakur. In the last assembly elections the Lok Dal got 46 seats, the Janata Party 13 and the BJP 16 while the Congress(I) had an impressive 196 seats. With very little in terms of achievements to shout about, and the Janata Dal-led front in an upbeat mood, this election is bound to be a last ditch stand for Jagannath Mishra and his party.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

STAR STRUCK

Shatrughan Sinha is realising that in politics too, heroes are capable of playing villains after being snubbed by many Janata Dal bigwigs. Though he said he has neither the *shakal* (looks) nor the *akal* (brains) to be chief minister he is trying to impress non-Congress(I) parties to emerge as consensus candidate.

GUJARAT

Strong Allies

Janata Dal-BJP forge ahead

FOR the Congress(I), the assembly elections this time posed a curious problem. Many of its stalwarts like cabinet ministers Mahant Vijaydasji, Harisinh Mahide, Suresh Mehta and Speaker Barjori Pardiwala refused to accept the party ticket. Even Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki tried to pull out, but was finally cajoled with the seemingly safe Borsad seat. This illustrates what even senior Congress(I) leaders feel about its prospects in an election where the Janata Dal-BJP combine appears poised on the threshold of power.

Number of seats	**182**
Total electorate	**2,43,30,170**
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	149
Janata Party	14
BJP	11
Others	8

Patel and Solanki: old war

As it hit the campaign trail, the Congress(I) was trying to desperately buoy its unenthusiastic workers. "The Lok Sabha poll verdict was an accident. We are all set to get a majority," declared Solanki. Though a majority seems a wild dream, the party stands a fair chance of securing over 60 seats—as against a lead in just 32 assembly segments in the November polls. The party also pins hopes on its recent populist measures like loan waivers and pay hikes.

Infighting, however, plagues the Congress(I). Says a party leader: "The poll is a fight for supremacy between Solanki and Amarsinh Chaudhary." Sixty sitting MLAs have been dropped while 40 of Chaudhary's followers have got tickets. Says Himmat Charan, a Solanki supporter and a rebel candidate: "The leaders are treating the Congress(I) as their

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political zamindari. We won't tolerate it anymore."

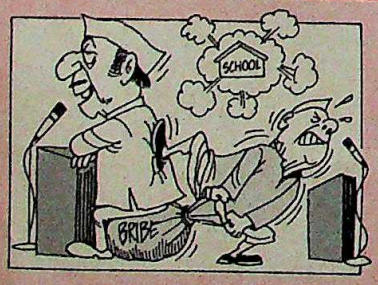
The Janata Dal and the BJP, however, have dug in deep. Though their talks on seat adjustments were not fully successful—they are sharing 100 of the 182 seats and fighting each other in the remaining—there are chances that both the parties might still avert a split in the anti-Congress(I) votes by pulling out candidates who don't have a good chance.

The Janata Dal and the BJP have launched a frontal attack on Chief Minister Solanki for provoking a caste war in 1985 which left 400 people dead. The main plank of the Janata Dal is the performance of the National Front Government at the Centre, though the Congress(I) will try to cash in on the Kashmir situation. The BJP has also announced its support to former chief minister Babubhai Patel, who is contesting as a member of the Lok Swaraj Manch. The BJP's gameplan is to use Babubhai's snow-white image to counter Chimanbhai Patel's influence among the masses.

Such political under-cutting is bound to harm the Janata Dal-BJP combine. And after the elections, if the combine emerges victorious, there will most likely be a scramble for the chief ministership. The BJP is projecting Parliamentary Board Chairman Kesubhai Patel as chief minister, while Chimanbhai Patel, who is fighting film actress Shraddha Panchotia of the Congress(I) in Unjha, has also set his eye on the throne. But a facade is being maintained. At a joint press conference they said: "The issue will be thrashed out by the new MLAs of the two parties if they win a majority."

Certainly, if there is anything that can yoke these parties together it is power.

—UDAY MAHURKAR



REBEL RATIONALE

Election time is when many shed their political ideology at the drop of a party ticket and turn rebels. A Congress(I) rebel in Gujarat only wants to get back Rs 34,000 he had earlier given the party candidate for favours.

RAJASTHAN

Right on Top

BJP mounts an offensive

WITH assembly elections on the horizon, cocktail circuits in Rajasthan have a new term for a political barometer: 'Bhaironmeter'. The 67-year-old BJP stalwart Bhairon Singh Shekhawat is confident the wind is blowing his way. Pointing out to the 3,000-strong crowd of ticket-seekers outside his residence last fortnight, he said: "They have already got the whiff of victory."

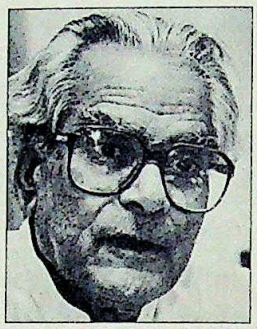
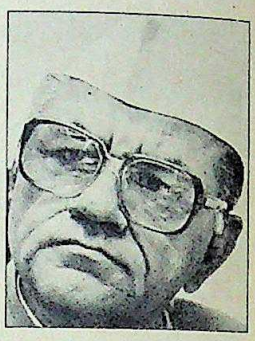
The confidence was shared by the BJP's electoral ally, the Janata Dal. Said Ajit Singh, Janata Dal secretary-general: "We see strong chances of a coalition government in the state." The reasons: for one, the neat understanding on seats between the BJP and the Janata Dal; and for another, the divided house of the ruling Congress(I)—where the faction led by Ashok Gehlot is openly up in arms on the seat distribution issue.

However, the Opposition too had its nervous moments. As the tussle for seats got underway, the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board Chairman Devi Lal, who had effectively lobbied for sharing seats with the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, did a somersault. This time he suggested his party have no truck with the BJP. Projecting Union Textile Minister Nathu Ram Mirdha as the next chief minister, Devi Lal floated a list of 199 Janata Dal candidates for the 200-member assembly and insisted his party could do a Haryana in Rajasthan too. In retaliation, the BJP said it too would field candidates in all constituencies.

To save the situation, Janata Dal President V.P. Singh sent the party's suave General Secretary Yashwant Sinha. Sinha, along with the BJP's Jaswant Singh, finally worked out a practical alliance. First, the two leaders asked their state partymen to list 80 seats they were willing to concede. That took care of 160 seats on which there was no major clash of interests. Of the remaining 40 seats, neither party staked its claim for the 11 'orphan constituencies'. For 17 seats, it was decided that a triangular fight would benefit the Opposition. That left only 12 seats for electoral adjustments.

The exercise in the Congress(I) boardrooms was even more unseemly. Chief Minister Harideo Joshi—who had recently stemmed a revolt in the party with Rajiv Gandhi's blessings—made it clear that he called the shots. About 75 per cent of the seats were kept for his followers and 49 sitting MLAs, including six ministers, were dropped. The wily Joshi made sure Gehlot was isolated. Gehlot's supporters—who had earlier helped topple Joshi as chief minister in favour of Shiv Charan Mathur—were excluded. But Joshi made sure he gained the confidence of former chief ministers Shiv Charan Mathur and Jagannath Pahadia by including their supporters. To ensure an effective caste balance, Joshi also took followers of Jat leader and Rajasthan PCC(I) President Parasram Maderna.

Said a piqued former minister: "This is

Shekhawat and Joshi: unequal race

Number of seats	200
Total electorate	2,58,12,548
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	113
BJP	39
Lok Dal	27
Janata Party	10
Others	11

GREAT ESCAPE

B.S. Shekhawat, the state BJP chief, had a tough time dealing with over 3,000 ticket aspirants who camped at his house. He fled to a nearby hotel. After waiting for two days the crowd moved out.

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a totally unjustified list. It will prove bad for the party." Joshi was defensive. Said he: "I have been given the task of seeing the party through these elections. I am working to achieve that."

But that is not going to prove so simple. In the run-up to the elections, there was an upbeat Shekhawat in his Dholpur constituency exhorting the crowds to repeat their Lok Sabha verdict. There was a cautious Joshi in Banswara trusting his political cunning to repeat the 1984 feat when his party bagged a winning 113 seats.

However, with the dice heavily loaded against the faction-ridden ruling party, it seemed clear that the 'Bhairon-meter' was the best indicator of the future political weather in the state.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

ORISSA

No Contest

Janata Dal rides in triumph

THERE is no headier brew than success. Invigorated by the Janata Dal-led front's victory in 18 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats, Biju Patnaik exudes the confidence of a man within handshaking reach of power. During the buildup to the assembly elections, in which the Janata Dal, CPI and the CPI(M) are pitted against a demoralised Congress(I), he imperiously announced that a second steel plant would be set up at Paradeep and a sponge unit would come up in Keonjhar.

Number of seats	147
Total electorate	1,94,35,289
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	117
Janata Party	21
CPI	1
Others	8

Biju and Satpathy: one-sided

No one except the PCC(I) chief Nandini Satpathy—her son, Tathagata, is contesting on a Janata Dal ticket from Dhenkanal Sadar, which was her fief, while she has shifted to neighbouring Gondia—gives the Congress(I) even an outside chance of retaining power. "We are in the race to win," she claims. Having led only in 17 of the 147 assembly segments in the general elections, the Congress(I) has gone in for a desperate face-lift, dumping its chief minister J.B. Patnaik and denying seats to 50 sitting MLAs. Populist measures like waiving of loans and doles for the unemployed are among measures passed by the Hemananda Biswal-led Government in a bid to hold together its eroding base.

But it is all likely to be of little avail. The corruption of the J.B. Patnaik regime will perhaps be the dominant issue in the campaign. "Who can forgive them for their corruption," says Bhagabat Dehera, Janata Dal MLA. But J.B. Patnaik, who is not contesting, says "corruption has never been an issue in Orissa".

The Janata Dal too has its share of problems. For one, not everyone could be accommodated. The party has to contend with 12 major rebel candidates. The CPI, which was given nine seats, and the CPI(M) which was allotted four seats—Janata Dal will contest 134—have made no secret of their displeasure at not being given the number of seats promised. Said CPI State Secretary Loknath Chowdhury: "If such is the arm-twisting why have adjustments at all ?"

The Janata Dal chakra has started rolling towards the seat of power. The Congress(I) hand does not seem to have the strength to stop it.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Uphill Task

Tough going for Congress(I)

WHILE nearly every Congress(I) chief minister fell victim to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's 'revolving-door policy', the low-profile Virbhadra Singh proved a notable exception to the rule—completing his term as

Number of seats	68
Total electorate	29,74,325
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	58
BJP	7
Others	3

UTTAR PRADESH

Tough Duels

THE major campaign issue for one parliamentary and five assembly by-elections this time will centre around the feeling that the Mulayam Singh Yadav led Janata Dal Ministry is a government of the backward classes. The Scheduled Castes are a bit disillusioned and if the Congress(I), under the new UPCC(I) Chief Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, manages to lure their votes it could make major gains. This factor will especially be visible in the Hardoi reserved parliamentary constituency where the Janata Dal's Chand Ram is defending the seat the party won in November against the Congress(I)'s Sukhdev Prasad. Parmai Lal, who died, had polled 43 per cent votes against 37.7 polled by Manni Lal of the Congress(I).

The Meerut Cantonment assembly seat has 38 candidates in the fray, but the contest will be between the BJP, Janata Dal and the Congress(I). Though it was a Congress(I) stronghold since 1974, the BJP wrested it in the November elections when the late Parmatma Sharan Mittal polled 47.4 per cent of the votes.

Bajpai: new test

In the Nanpara assembly seat, the CPI, which won from there in 1974 and 1977, is again flexing its muscle against the BJP and the Congress(I). In Khakra the fight will be between the Janata Dal and the Congress(I) and three-cornered in Chandpur and Sikandrabad.

These by-elections will provide enough indications as to how much the fiery communal situation had helped consolidate the anti-Congress(I) votes in the general elections. And the Congress(I) has to prove that it is not going to become a political cipher in the state.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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Himachal Pradesh chief minister.

But now the canny Singh faces a major challenge to his chair—from the state's electorate which shunned him in the Lok Sabha elections. Singh's task in the forthcoming assembly elections is to reverse the verdict. What makes matters worse is the fact that the main contender, the BJP-Janata Dal alliance, has arrived at total seat adjustments in the state—with 51 seats being contested by the BJP and 17 by the Janata Dal.

But Singh, though down, is certainly not out. Said he: "The general election was fought on national issues. I have done a lot for the state and the people will be with me."

The Congress(I) high command has cleared the decks for Singh by consigning to the dustbin a list of candidates proposed by his arch rival, former union minister Sukh Ram. That has placed

Singh and Kumar: sitting pretty

Singh in a position where he has to carry the elections alone.

Singh needs every ounce of support from his party because the BJP has emerged stronger after Shanta Kumar's return to state politics. When the BJP strongman won a Lok Sabha seat, many thought he would take to national politics. But, says BJP General Secretary Kedar Nath Sahni: "There was never any doubt. Shanta Kumar was always slated to return to the state and lead the party to victory."

The Janata Dal, on the other hand, has realised its lack of party infrastructure in the state. All its candidates for the Lok Sabha, including state chief Vijay Singh Mankotia, met with humiliating defeats. Though the party roped in former chief minister Ram Lal, it did not help matters as he was more keen in getting even with Singh than building the party.

Now Ram Lal is locked in a grudge bout with the chief minister at the Jubbal Kotkhai constituency, forcing Singh to file his nomination from the Rohru constituency as well. And with Shanta Kumar sitting pretty in his Kangra bastion, Singh faces an uphill task in the state.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

ECHO OF DEFEAT

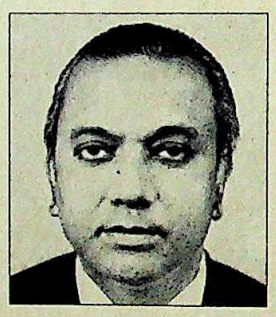
Anand Sharma, campaigning in Himachal Pradesh, has fitted out his version of the rath, a Maruti Gypsy, with an acoustic system which produces multiple echoes. He hopes the hills will resound to his rhetoric for a long time.

PONDICHERRY

Ticket Chaos

Congress(I) has the edge

THIRTY assembly seats might seem a lot for the tiny Union territory of Pondicherry (electorate: six lakh). However, judging by the infighting in various parties, they are grossly insufficient.



Farookh: splinter group

The Congress(I), which is contesting 17 seats, found itself faced with a revolt by its youth wing when it announced its candidates. Its list, which renominated 12 sitting members, did not give adequate representation to the youth and women. The party is also split into three groups led by Chief Minister M.O.H. Farookh, PCC(I) Chief Shanmugam and Health Minister P. Kannan.

Matters are no different in the AIADMK, the Congress(I)'s electoral partner, which is contesting 13 seats. Some angry party members say that Jayalalitha put slips containing the names of candidates in one bowl, the names of constituencies in another, and decided the final list by randomly matching one slip from each bowl.

In the Opposition camp, the DMK, which is contesting 18 seats, is divided into two groups—one led by D. Ramachandran, former AIADMK chief minister and the other by R.V. Janakiraman, a confidant of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Besides, DMK members feel

Number of seats	**30**
Total electorate	**5,85,175**
Party position after 1985 elections:	
Congress(I)	15
AIADMK	6
DMK	5
Janata Party	2
Others	2

the party has been too generous in allotting three seats to the CPI and two to the CPI(M)—particularly since the left does not have a strong base in Pondicherry.

The Janata Dal is contesting seven seats. Led by Pethaperumal—Pondicherry's Mr Clean—the party's internal dissensions were accentuated after Pethaperumal refused to allot a seat to Subbaraya Goundar, a former Janata MLA who is a Vanniar. Since Vanniars, who have all along complained of not being given enough representation in the Cabinet, form a sizeable section of the population the party's prospects could be affected. Also in the fray is the Paatali Makkal Katchi—a Vanniar party that is contesting all 30 seats—which could seriously eat into the DMK vote.

At present, the Congress(I) seems to have the upper hand. Its principal election plank is that it has been able to provide a stable government. Says an optimistic G.K. Moopanar, AICC(I) observer for the Pondicherry elections: "The Congress(I) Government has given a good administration. And we have a good alliance. We should win." The cabinet hasn't been reshuffled even once in five years—an achievement that merits mention in the Congress(I) book of records. Farookh is hoping the electorate shares the sentiment.

—KAVITHA SHETTY in Pondicherry

CROSS CONNECTION

In a Pondicherry village, the acoustic system played dirty. The wire from one candidate's mike got connected to the amplifier of another. Each called for his own defeat.

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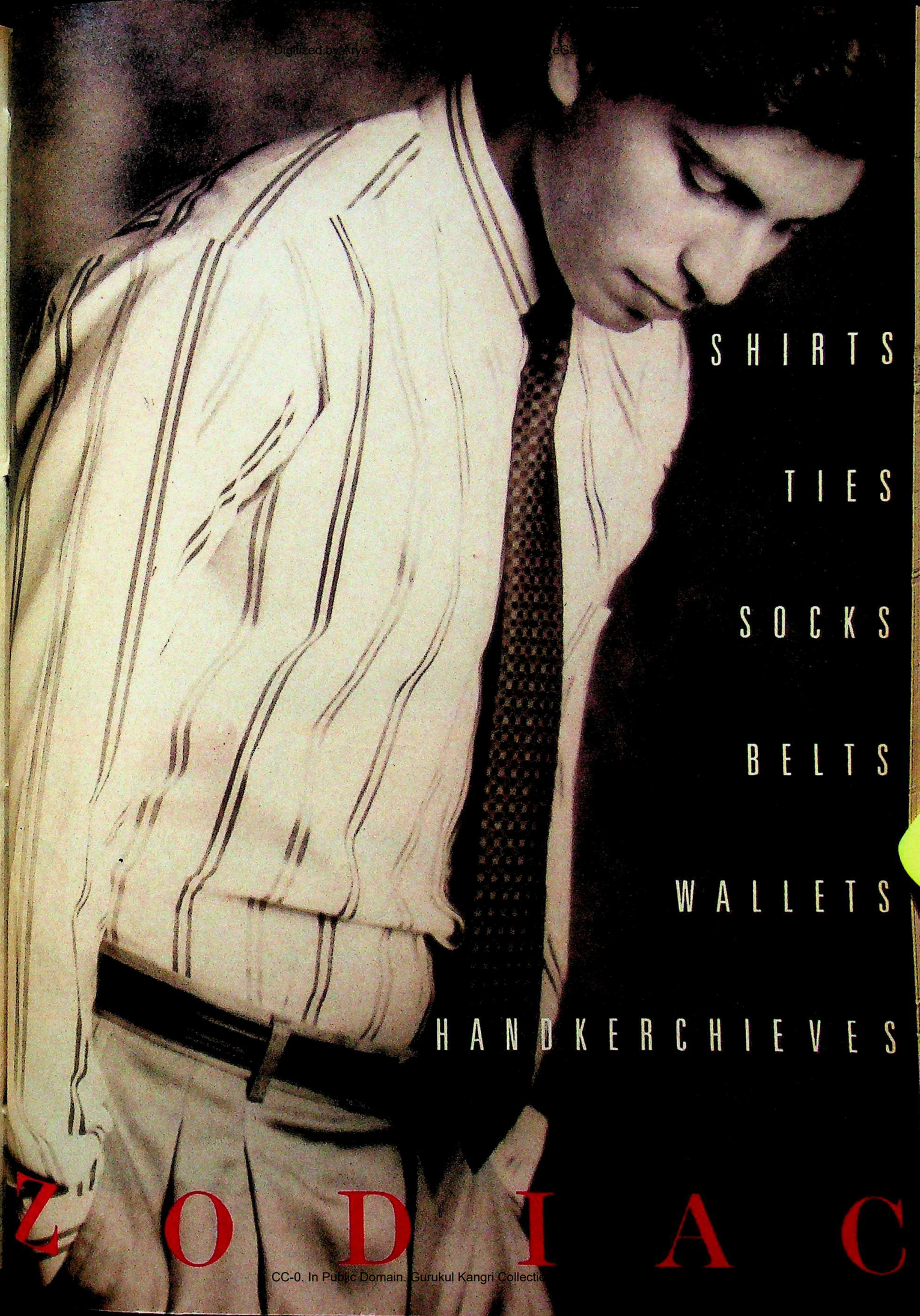

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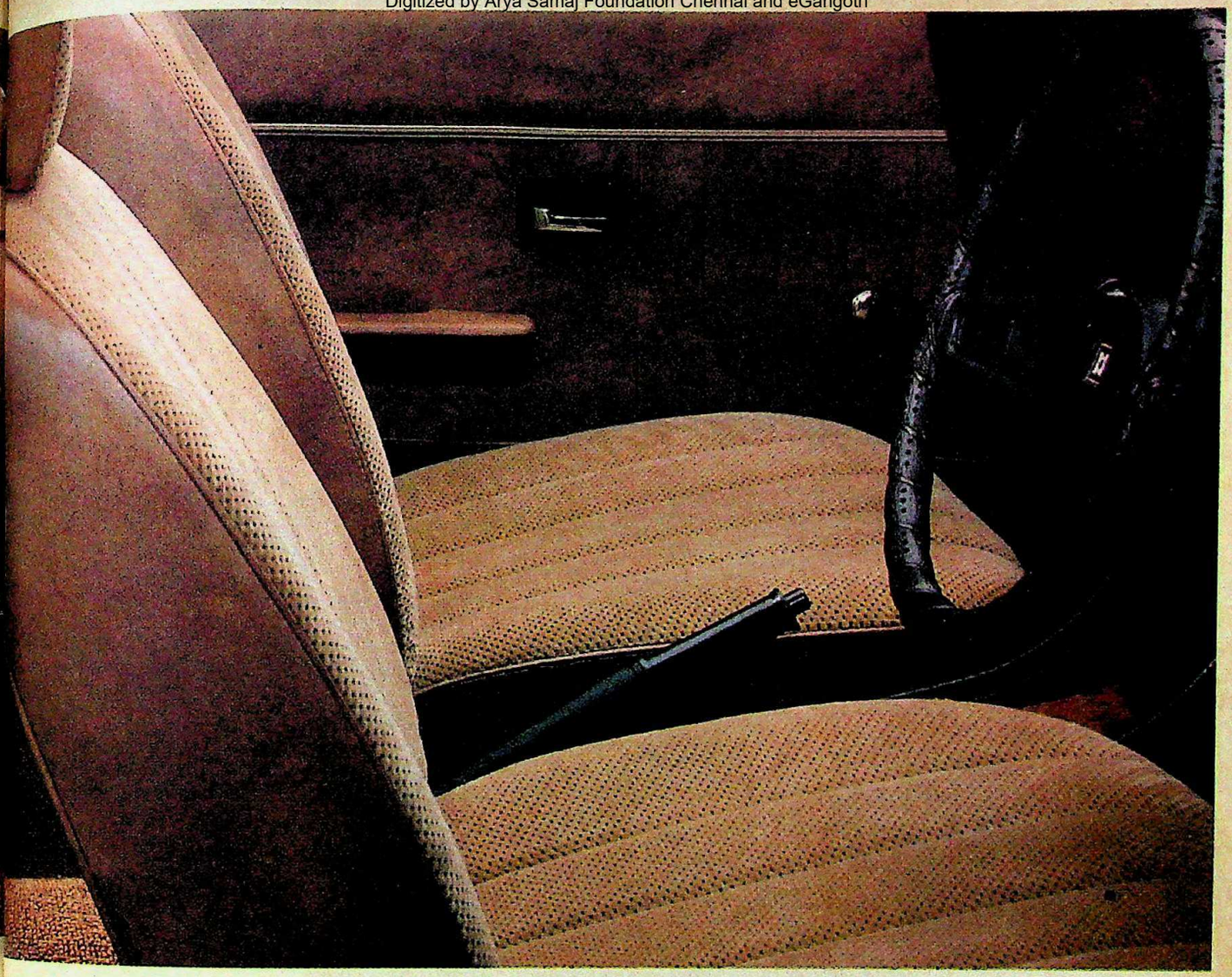

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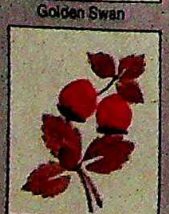
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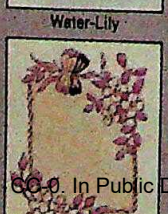
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RAJIV GANDHI

Security Sniping

Angry charges traded over new arrangement

WHEN the leader of the Opposition Rajiv Gandhi travelled to Manipur recently it did not create any political upheavals. But within the Congress(I) it indeed created a flutter. The reason: only one personal security guard travelled with the former prime minister.

This, combined with the fact that the National Front Government has cut down the cost of guarding Rajiv from Rs 5 crore a year to Rs 1 crore, gave the Congress(I) the opportunity to mount a shrill campaign criticising the dismantling of the extensive Special Protection Group (SPG) security ring that has surrounded Rajiv for the last several years.

To the Government's announcement increasing Rajiv's security outlay from Rs 75 lakh to Rs 1 crore, M.J. Akbar, the Congress(I) spokesman, retorted: "This is the first time a man's life is being measured in rupees." Kamlapati Tripathi wrote a letter to the prime minister expressing apprehension, and V.P. Singh, in turn, reassured the Congress(I) leader that all precautions were being taken. Singh said that the security contingent provided to Rajiv was much higher than that provided to any dignitary out of office.

But Congress(I) leaders were not impressed. "God forbid, if something happens to Rajiv Gandhi, the National Front Government will be responsible," warned one senior leader.

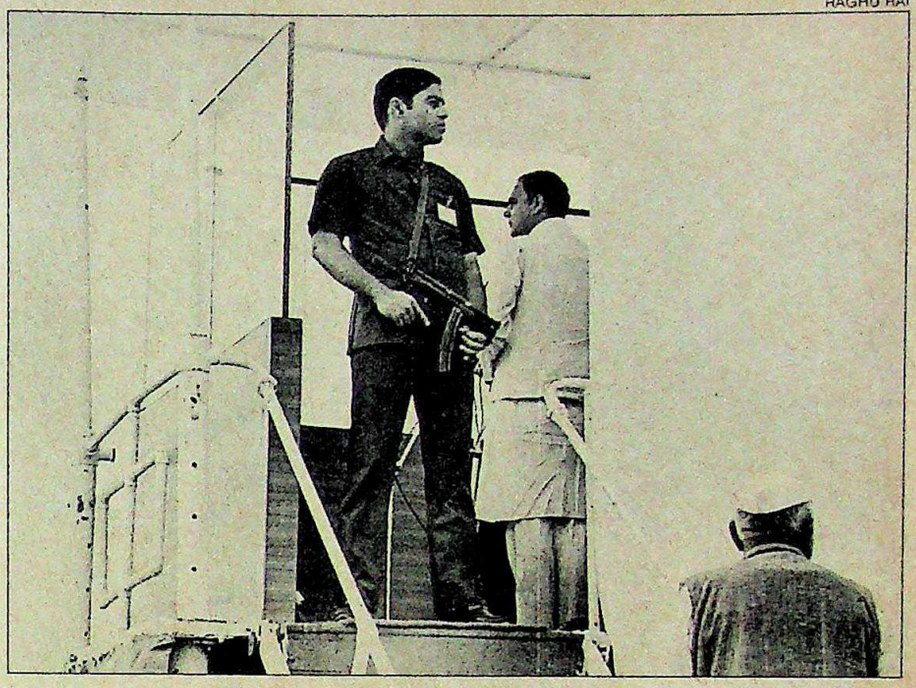
Retorted Jaipal Reddy, spokesman of the Janata Dal: "Under their own law SPG is meant only for the prime minister. The Government is convinced that the security given to Rajiv is adequate—it equals that given to six cabinet ministers." But the Congress(I)'s demand now is that an ordinance should be issued to bring even former prime ministers under the ambit of the SPG, which was constituted in 1985 and given the status of an armed force of the Union in 1988.

It was on February 1 that the Home Ministry in consultation with the police department and the IB reviewed alternative security arrangements for Rajiv and decided that 125 security personnel drawn from the National Security Guard (NSG)—which existed before the SPG and was protecting Buta Singh—and four bullet proof cars and an escort car would be enough. The Government also cleared all the modifications that the Congress(I) wanted in the 10, Janpath bungalow allotted to Rajiv.

These included more checking booths, one-way window panes, blast proof walls and facilities to light up the entire premises. And an assistant commissioner of police was posted for coordinating the security arrangements. Rajiv was also given the option of retaining anyone from the SPG in the present set-up. Moreover the number of security personnel was increased from 125 to 150. The former minister of state for home, P. Chidambaram, took it upon himself to check out the arrangements at 10, Janpath. All the recommendations made by him were also accepted.

Yet, the Congress(I) does not seem happy with the arrangements for it has asked for another discussion on Rajiv's security set-up. "We have to sit together and work out the issue. We will give our perception and get the Centre's views," Rajiv is also reported to have said.

RAGHU RAI



SPG men guard Rajiv: high-risk individual

Both the Government and the Congress(I) are trying to gain political mileage out of the security issue.

Another grouse that the Congress(I) brings to the fore is that the NSG, which is now protecting Rajiv, is trained only in counter-terrorist operations, and not competent to protect the former prime minister. But a DIG of the NSG asserts that the NSG personnel are also fully trained in the protection of VIPs. Says he: "Why did the former government rely on it for the protection of high-risk individuals like Zail Singh, P. Chidambaram and Buta Singh if it was inadequately trained?"

Nor is the hue and cry only over Rajiv's security arrangements. It is clear both sides are trying to extract political mileage from the issue: the Government by trying to show how much Rajiv's security costs the exchequer, and the Congress(I) by trying to paint the ruling party as vindictive. Even Buta Singh has begun to complain. His grouse: the 215 personnel and four escort cars he had have been scaled down to 54 security personnel and four escort cars. "The Government has left me defenceless. But God will protect me," he says.

Counters Jaipal Reddy: "The Congress(I) has run out of issues. Our government is performing well and they have little to talk about. Moreover the Bofors noose is tightening. Some diversion is required."

Certainly there is more politics than security involved in this unseemly squabble. —SHARMILA CHANDRA

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ANANDA MARG

Suddenly Under Siege

The socio-spiritual sect faces a major crackdown

ANANDA Marg—the 35-year-old socio-spiritual organisation which has 137 units world-wide—promises its followers a "path of eternal bliss". But if controversial events, that have pockmarked its history, are any indication, the path is ridden with pitfalls too.

Last fortnight, the organisation found itself plunging down one such pitfall, as the West Bengal Police and the Eastern Frontier Rifles launched a massive crackdown on Ananda Nagar—the sprawling upcoming global headquarters of Ananda Marg in the tribal-dominated Purulia district. The CPI(M) followed it up by gathering its cadre in the area ostensibly for a showdown with the Margis, thus readying the arena for yet another clash between the arch-rivals.

Said an exasperated Jagdishwaranand Awadhoot, publicity secretary of the Ananda Marg: "We will extend our moral support to any front in West Bengal to prevent the CPI(M) and its cadre from continuing their reign of terror in the state."

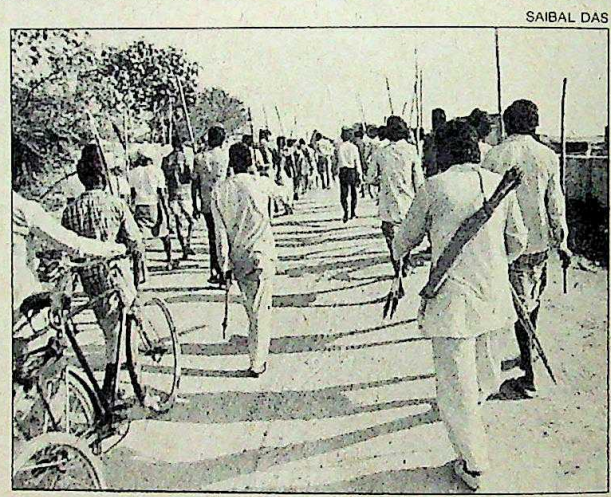
The spark which set off this siege of the Marg headquarters was a shoot-out at a CPI(M) meeting at the Pundagh school on January 24 in which two CPI(M) workers were killed and six wounded. The gunmen had fled on motorcycles towards Bagtulla, within Ananda Marg territory.

Though the district administration is yet to prove the involvement of Ananda Margis in the killings, the Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, held them responsible. The Ananda Marg in turn blamed the internal politics of the CPI(M). But the police rounded up 60 Ananda Margis and put up a sort of blockade of Ananda Nagar.

According to Basu, the Ananda Margis had been creating law and order problems in Purulia for the past one month, targeting the CPI(M). But a People's Union of Civil Liberties team, which toured the area, blamed the CPI(M) for excesses against the organisation and reported to the Union Home Secretary, Shiromani Sharma, that the Ananda Marg apprehended a massacre by the CPI(M).

ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA

SAIBAL DAS



Margis' school vandalised by CPI(M) workers; (right) CPI(M) rally at Purulia

The crackdown has come at a time when the Ananda Marg is passing through a phase of revival. Ananda Nagar is seen as a symbol of this expansion.

Being built over an area of 110 sq km, covering a cluster of nearly 50 villages in Purulia bordering Bihar, Ananda Nagar will have its own municipality, industrial estates, meditation centres, educational institutions and marketing complex. At the moment Ananda Nagar is spread over nearly 500 acres.

The mystery that shrouds the closely guarded spiritual city has for sometime now aroused the suspicion of the people. The CPI(M) and the state Government also charge the Ananda Margis with capturing large areas of tribal and forest land after terrorising forest officials and innocent Adivasis.

But the Ananda Marg says that the land was purchased by its founder, Tarakh Brahma, 'Param Purusha' Ananda Murti, 67 (formerly a railway clerk, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar) in 1963. It also claims that much land has been gifted to the organisation by its followers.

But Buddhadev Bhattacharya, minister for local government and urban development, alleges that the Margis have been indulging in wanton encroachment of government land. "Margis had already grabbed about 400 acres of government land and 170 acres of *rayoti* land in Joypur and Jhalda areas of Purulia," he says.

The January 24 shoot-out has given the police and the local residents the opportunity for a closer scrutiny of the mysterious Ananda Nagar. The siege has also revived memories of the incident that took place in 1982 when 17 Ananda Margis were burnt alive in Calcutta by an enraged mob. The mob was instigated by rumours that children were being kidnapped by the orange-robed and dagger-wielding members of the organisation.

The CPI(M) members have always been provoked by the very sight of Ananda Margis and their cult philosophy. And since 1979, clashes have been frequent. The police have, according to the state Government, detected the involvement of the Ananda Marg and Amra Bengali, a right-wing chauvinist front organisation, in many mysterious bomb explosions in the state.

The way things are shaping up, Ananda Nagar it seems will be unable to provide much spiritual solace.

—FARZAND AHMED

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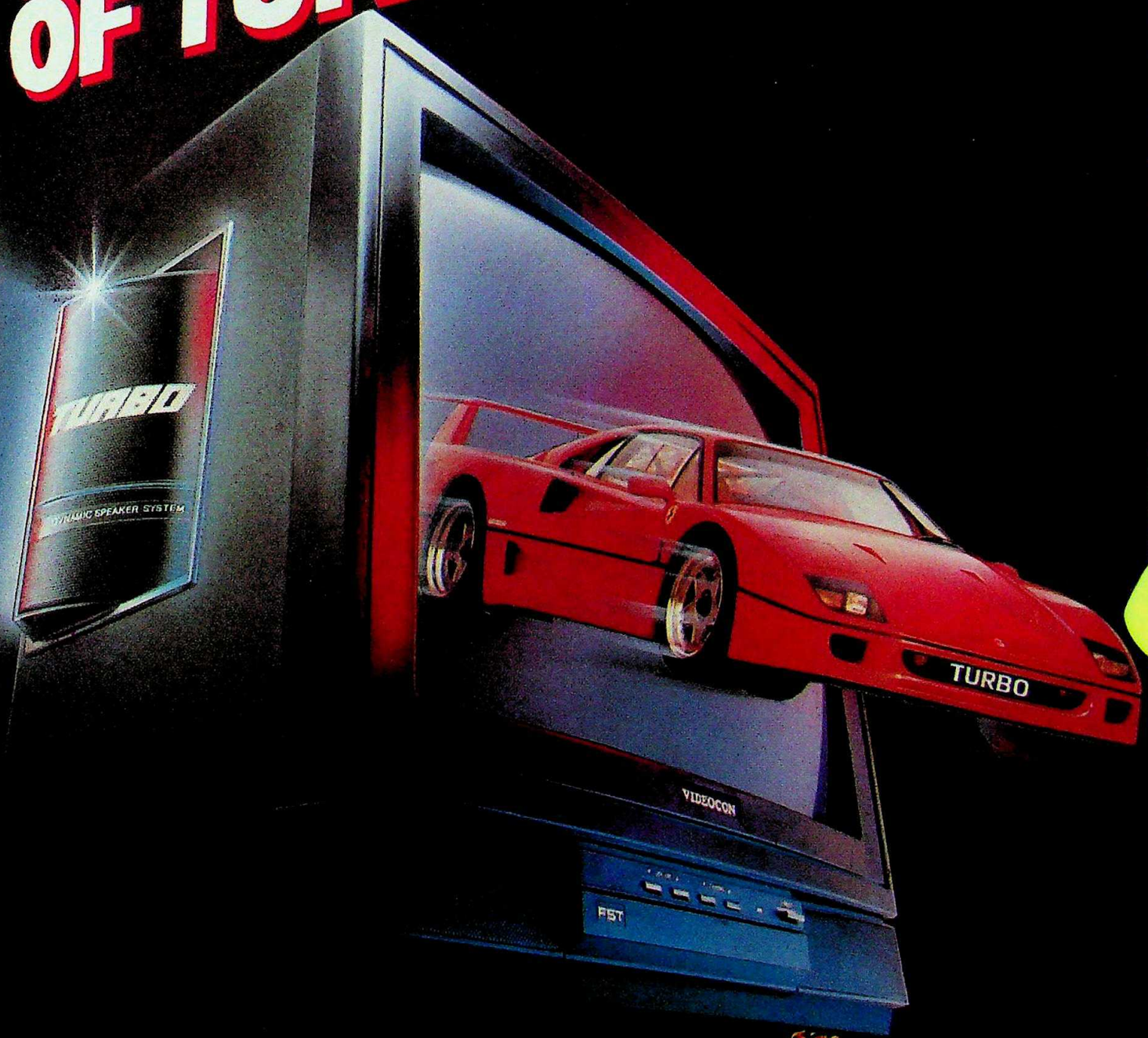

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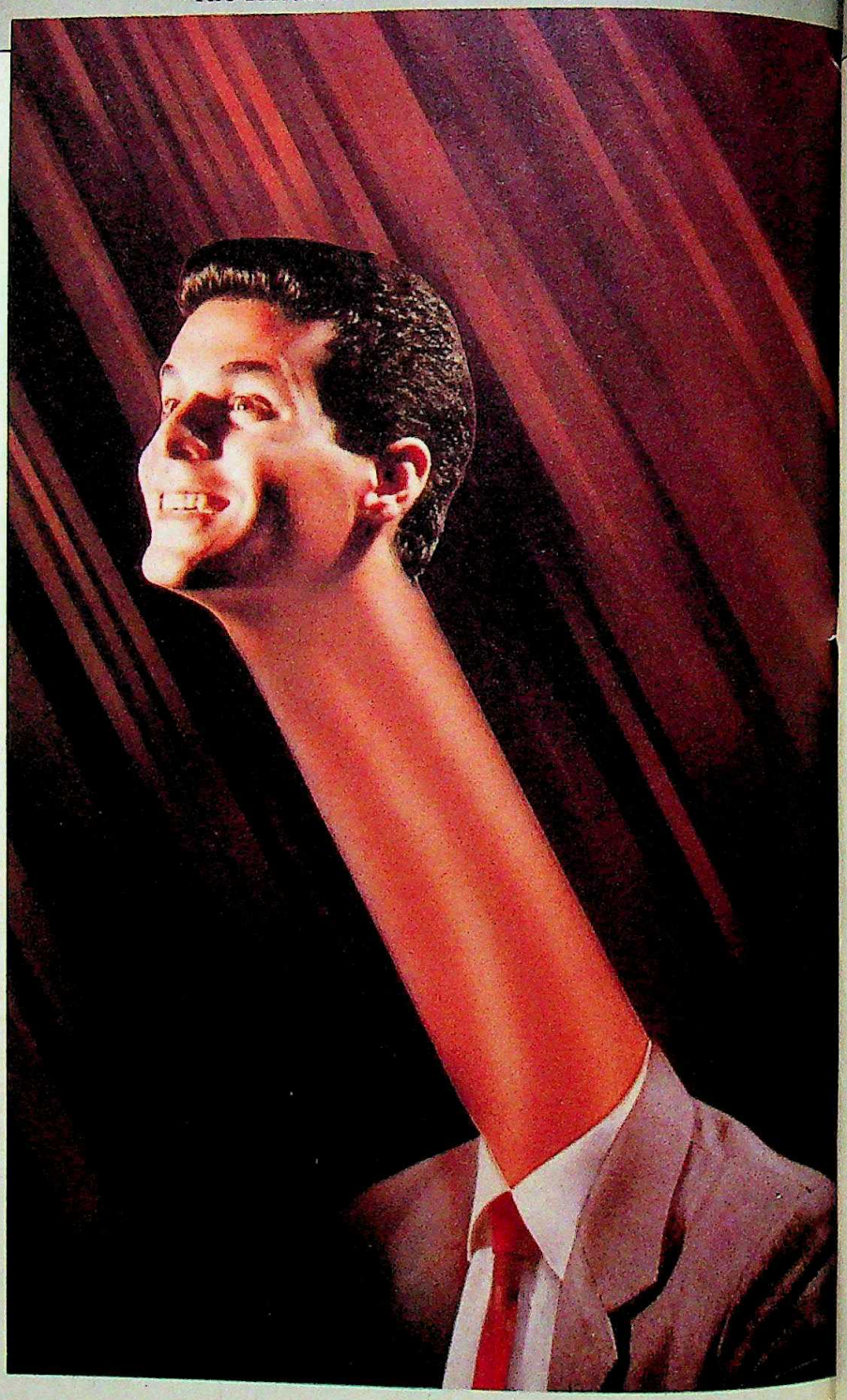

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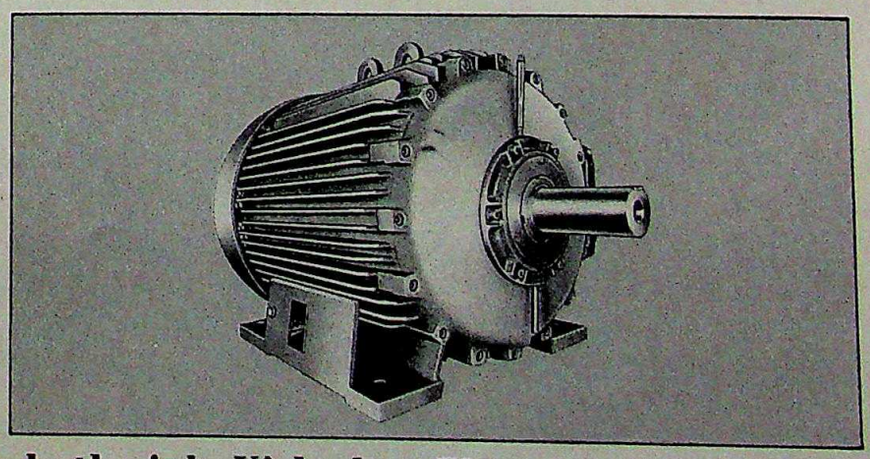

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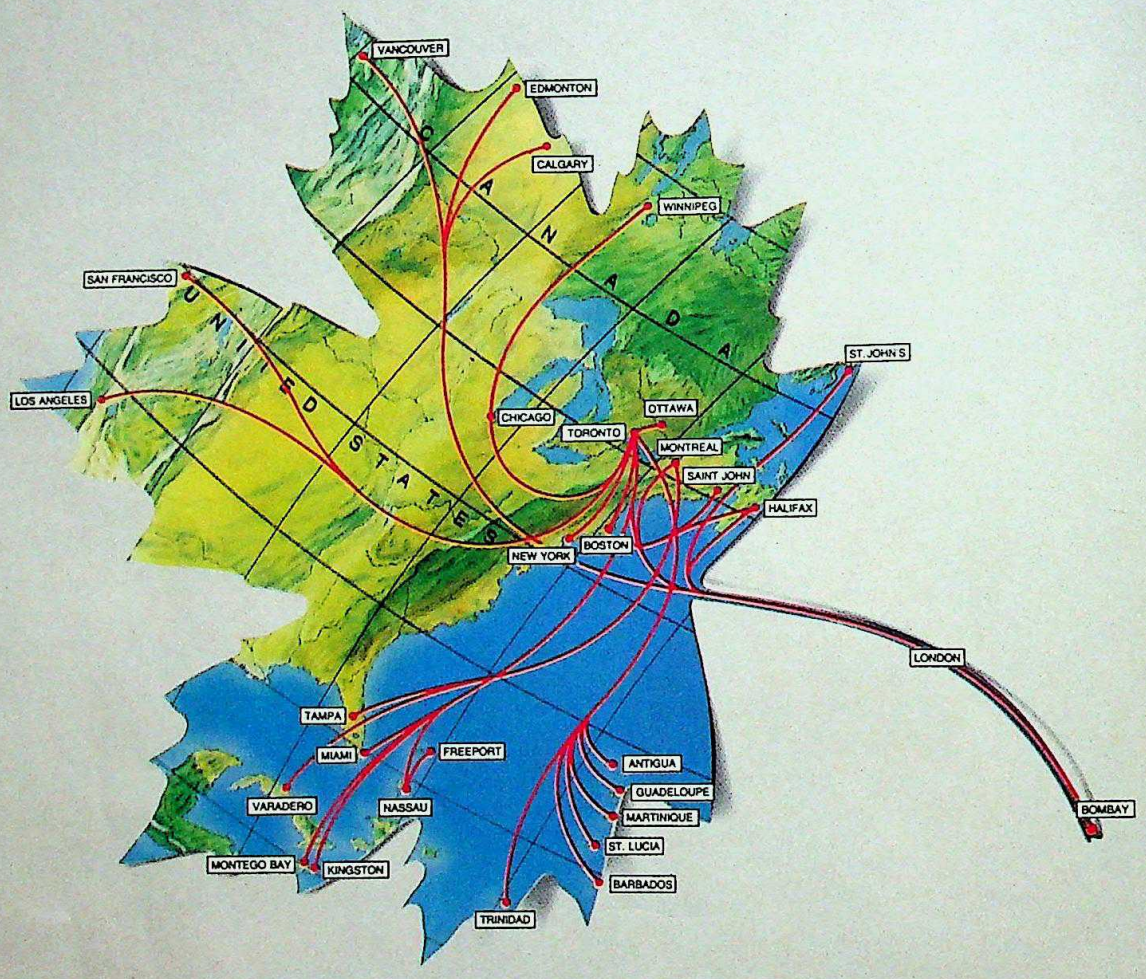

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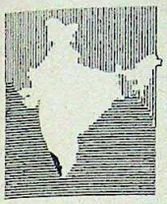
KERALA

A Learning Experience

Successful literacy mission creates awareness



IT'S a story of how concerted human effort can achieve miracles. Of how the determination and commitment of over 22,000 people helped Ernakulam district in Kerala become totally literate.

Making this proud declaration was Prime Minister V.P. Singh, who flew down to Ernakulam last fortnight on the successful completion of Operation Floodlight—conceived by Collector K.R. Rajan to make all those between the ages of five and 60 in the district literate. The Ernakulam model is now likely to be replicated all over India as the national literacy mission takes shape.

Interestingly, the operation has been successful in not only stoking the neo-literates' urge to learn, but also in breeding in them an awareness of their rights and potential. The neo-literates are now taking the initiative to demand basic facilities. Some want piped water. Others want better health services, self-employment schemes and so on.

Says an ecstatic Rajan: "This is what we wanted. We just did not want to teach alphabets. Neo-literates have realised that they too have rights and have discovered the self-confidence to demand them."

Thousands of letters from neo-literates pour into Rajan's office everyday, thanking him for having helped them step into a new world. Parukutty, a tribal, demands a library in her hamlet in the forests so that she can continue to learn; another, Madhavi, wants to know if she can now learn English too.

When Rajan first suggested the total literacy experiment, sceptics scoffed. A mammoth time-bound programme like this could soak a lot of funds and end up a failure, they said. But Rajan was determined.

Today, the critics credit the programme's success to the voluntary effort that marked every phase. Over 22,000 volunteers from various sections of society responded, coming forward without demands or expectations to teach the unlettered. Says Rajan: "Had any of the 22,000 literacy workers been paid, the programme would have collapsed. They would have joined it just to make some money."

The target was more ambitious than the national literacy mission's target group, 15-35 age group. A special survey—undertaken by 50,000 literacy workers on March 18 last year—revealed that of the district's 30 lakh population, 1.85 lakh were illiterate, 70 per cent of them women. However, around 39,000 could not be included because they were mentally handicapped, sick, infirm or alcoholic. The literacy percentage would be around 98, which under international norms was deemed total literacy.

The programme's greatest challenge was to motivate the people. A feeling had to be generated that an illiterate had no future. At the same time, inhibitions about being identified as unlettered had to be battled. And so a mass movement took off, with street plays, songs, marches, street-corner meetings and door-to-door motivation programmes.

The response was overwhelming. There was Mundi Muthassi, 106, determined to learn from Anthony, 69, a retired teacher in Cochin. Then there was the severely handicapped Sudharma, 14, who had never gone to school. Her father did not want her to be the only illiterate in Puthanvelakara and so carried her daily to the class.

And more than the alphabet was being taught. The instructors spoke of basic health, sanitation, cleanliness, environment protection, nutrition and family welfare. Says Shashidharan, an instructor: "The idea was to integrate literacy and development."

Women attending a literacy class; (bottom) a street play to promote literacy

More significant still was the drive's social impact. The crime rate fell. Island Gothuruth—known for brewing of illicit liquor—shed its image as residents began to opt for respectable jobs. The Manjalloor panchayat reported that compulsive drinkers were giving up liquor. Schools reported a fall in the drop-out rate. And neo-literates requested that attempts to educate them should not be discontinued.

The district administration says the programme has only just begun. Post-literacy strategies will now have to be taken up or neo-literates may slide back to illiteracy. Thus, literacy circles have been started, which will meet twice a month to continue their mission.

The story of Ernakulam turning literate in not just another statistic. It is a landmark that demands emulation.

—RAMESH MENON
in Ernakulam

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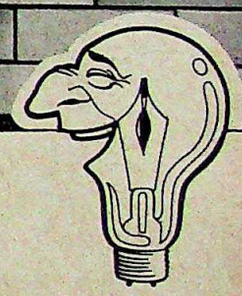

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1. The contest is open to amateur, non-professional Indian cartoonists above the age of 18 years (Those who earn a living from cartooning are not eligible. Please attach a signed declaration that you are not a professional cartoonist.)
2. All works must be original and unpublished.
3. The size of the cartoon should not exceed 30x50 cm. or be less than 20x30 cm.
4. Each entrant should indicate name, age, address, occupation, telephone number (if any) on the reverse side, in BLOCK LETTERS.
5. Each contestant may take part in either category or both, but submit no more than THREE entries in EACH category. All caricatures should be identified on the reverse side.
6. All prize-winning entries will become the property of The Hindustan Times. The Hindustan Times reserves the right to reproduce the award-winning cartoons in newspapers and magazines published by the HT Group.
7. All entries should be on white drawing paper and in black, waterproof ink. All drawings should be neat and clean. No drawings in colour will qualify.
8. The decision of the jury will be final and irrevocable.
9. The results of the contest will be published in The Hindustan Times dated March 18, 1990 (Dak editions: March 19)

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CHENNA REDDY

Arthritic Pace

Congress(I) Government makes a slow start

MORE than two months after he assumed office, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Dr Marri Chenna Reddy is pretty much where he started from. All he has done so far is to reverse several decisions made by the Telugu Desam government and announce that Rs 25 crore would be set apart in the fiscal year 1989-90 for an ambitious Rs 100-crore plan to create jobs for the unemployed and fulfil the party's election promise.

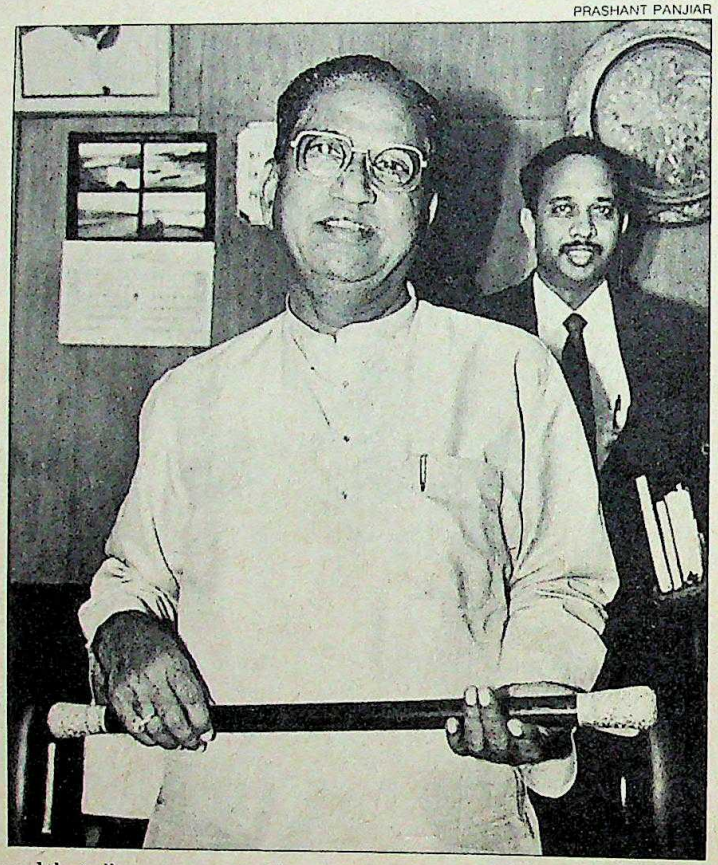
If his Congress(I) Government has taken a step forward in any direction, it is in dealing with the state's Naxalite problem. But here too, circumstances, rather than any initiative on Reddy's part, seem to have dictated matters. With Naxalites abducting MLAs and Praja Parishad members at will, there was no way the Government could have refused to act.

Commendably, Reddy has tackled it as a political problem, instead of regarding it as a law and order situation to be dealt with by the police. He announced that all Naxalite undertrials would be released if bail applications were presented in court; as many as 141 undertrials have been set free as a result. Reddy has also cancelled the orders enforcing the Disturbed Areas Act in regions where Naxalites have been active and urged the police to change their methods. Besides, he has offered to let the Naxalites campaign openly, provided they agreed to abjure violence.

So far, the chief minister has yet to get a positive response from the Naxalites. But he is keeping open the channels of communication, principally by getting his second son Sasidhar Reddy to talk to K.G. Kannabiran, president of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), who has long campaigned against the violation of the Naxalites' civil rights.

The APCLC has asked its activists to visit various jails and secure the release of undertrials. Kannabiran has asked the Government to withdraw the cases. At the same time, he has asked the leading Naxalite faction in the state—the People's War Group led by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah—to adopt a realistic approach and not indulge in abductions while the papers for setting free the undertrials are being moved.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Reddy: cautious moves

But welcome as Reddy's moves on the Naxalite issue are, they don't compensate for the arthritic pace he has set on other fronts. Transport Minister G.V. Sudhakar Rao has a picturesque explanation for the slow start. Says he: "What we have inherited is a dilapidated house. We have to set things in order before we go on to do something new for the benefit of the people."

The real reasons may not be quite so colourful. Reddy draws his strength from the support of party President Rajiv Gandhi rather than from a following of his own. The consequence: he has been wary of taking any policy decision that would antagonise any section within the party. For instance, Reddy is personally said to favour modifying the Rs 2-a-kilo rice scheme while continuing with the anti-poverty programme in order to reduce expenditure. But under pressure from cabinet colleagues, he has had to leave the scheme unchanged.

The size of his ministry too has much to do with Reddy's political support—or rather the lack of it. With just 19 members including himself, it is the smallest ministry since 1970 in the fourth largest state in the country. By delaying expansion, Reddy hopes to postpone dissidence by MLAs who are unable to make it to the ministry. But clearly the strategy will not work for ever.

To avoid antagonising various lobbies, Reddy has also not allowed ministers to take major decisions. Instead, he has constituted five permanent panels—on economy, agriculture and rural development, weaker sections, social services, and political and assembly affairs. These will discuss policies and strategies for implementing them before they finally come up before the Cabinet.

Reddy says the panels will improve the administration, since each problem will be discussed by several people. What he has left unsaid is that they also help him avoid taking the rap for bad policy decisions. Other ministers too will have to share the responsibility since they played a large part in shaping it.

The panels will also serve a short-term purpose. In April or May, Reddy will travel to the UK, and if necessary to the US, to attend to his eye and dental problems and for a check-up. The panels will run the Government in Reddy's absence and obviate the need for naming an acting chief minister.

Reddy laughs away the rumours that he is suffering from a serious ailment. Says he: "I allowed them deliberately to spot those interested in the chief minister's office. At least three persons are gunning to replace me." But perhaps, it's no laughing matter. The precedent of N.T. Rama Rao, who was upstaged by N. Bhaskar Rao soon after undergoing a cardiac bypass surgery abroad, must give him a queasy feeling.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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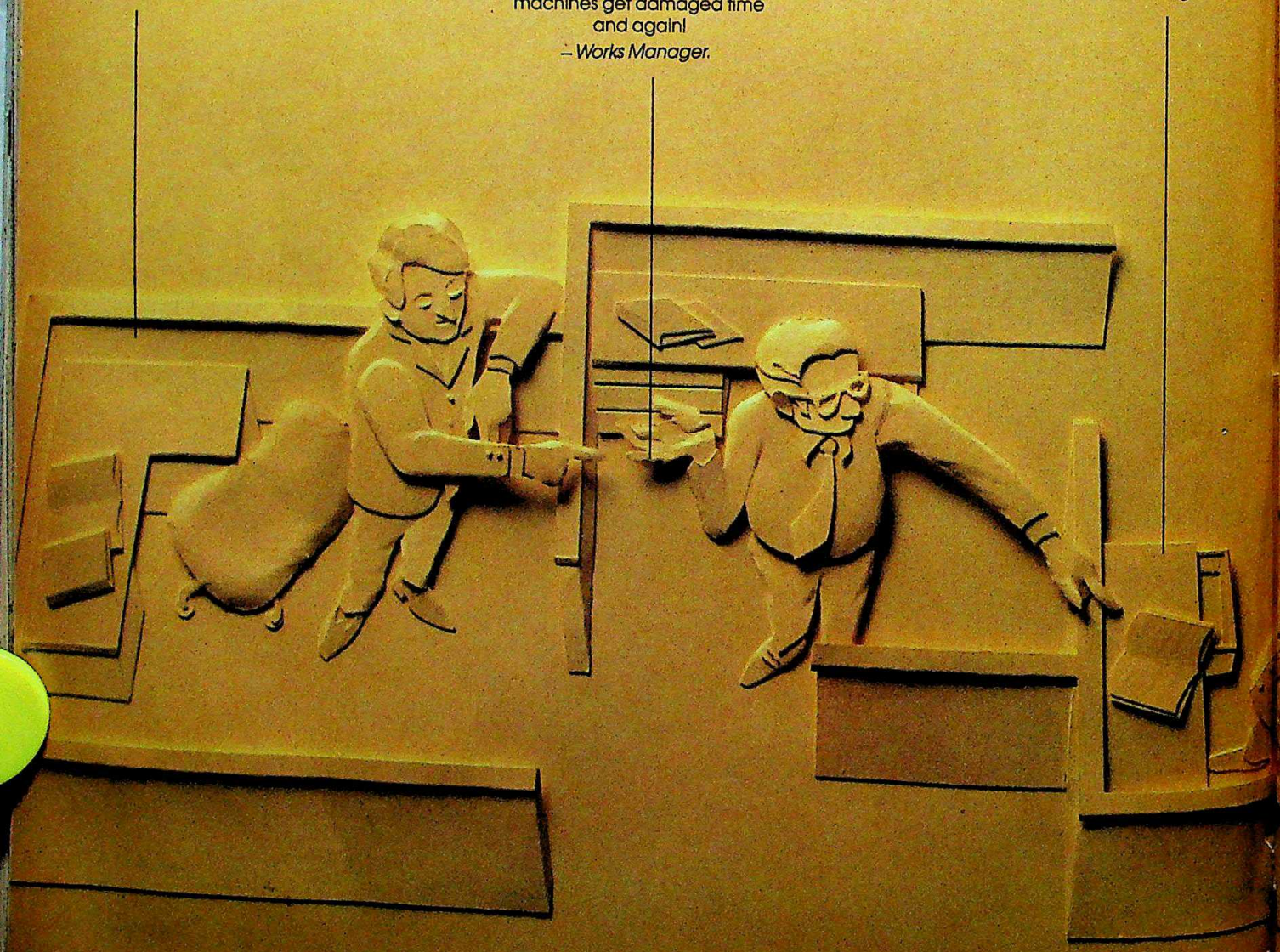

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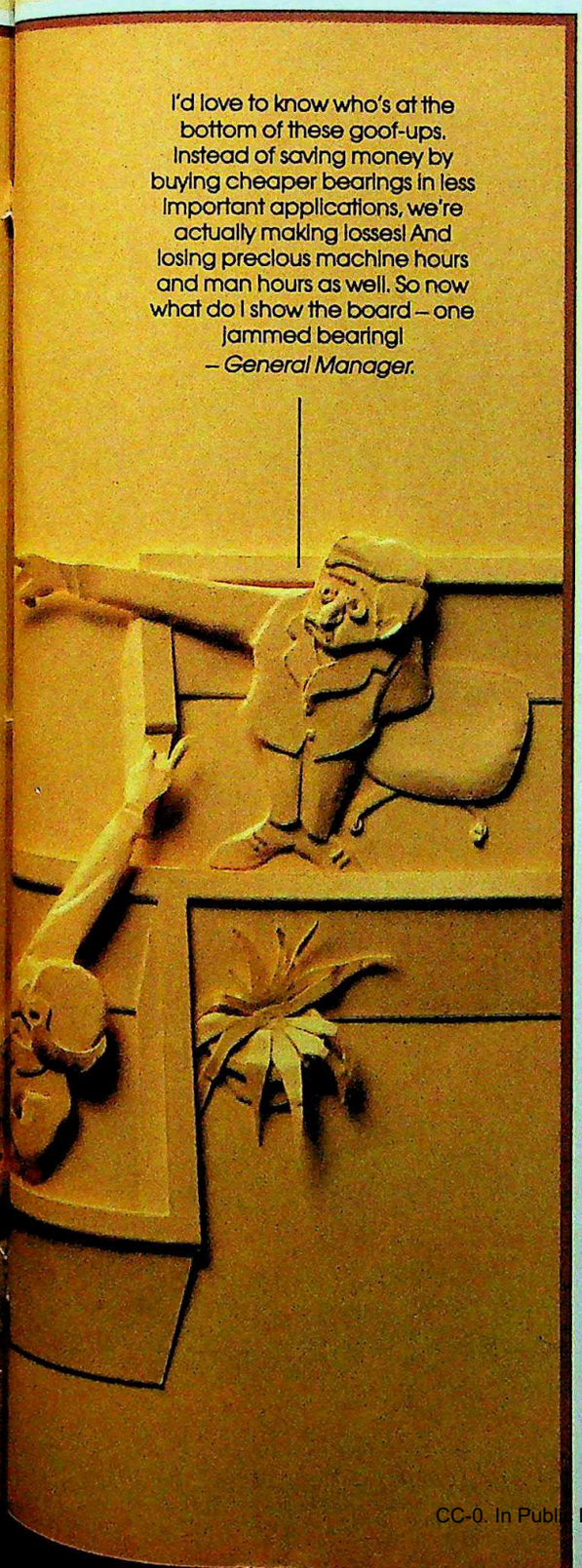

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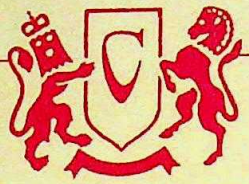

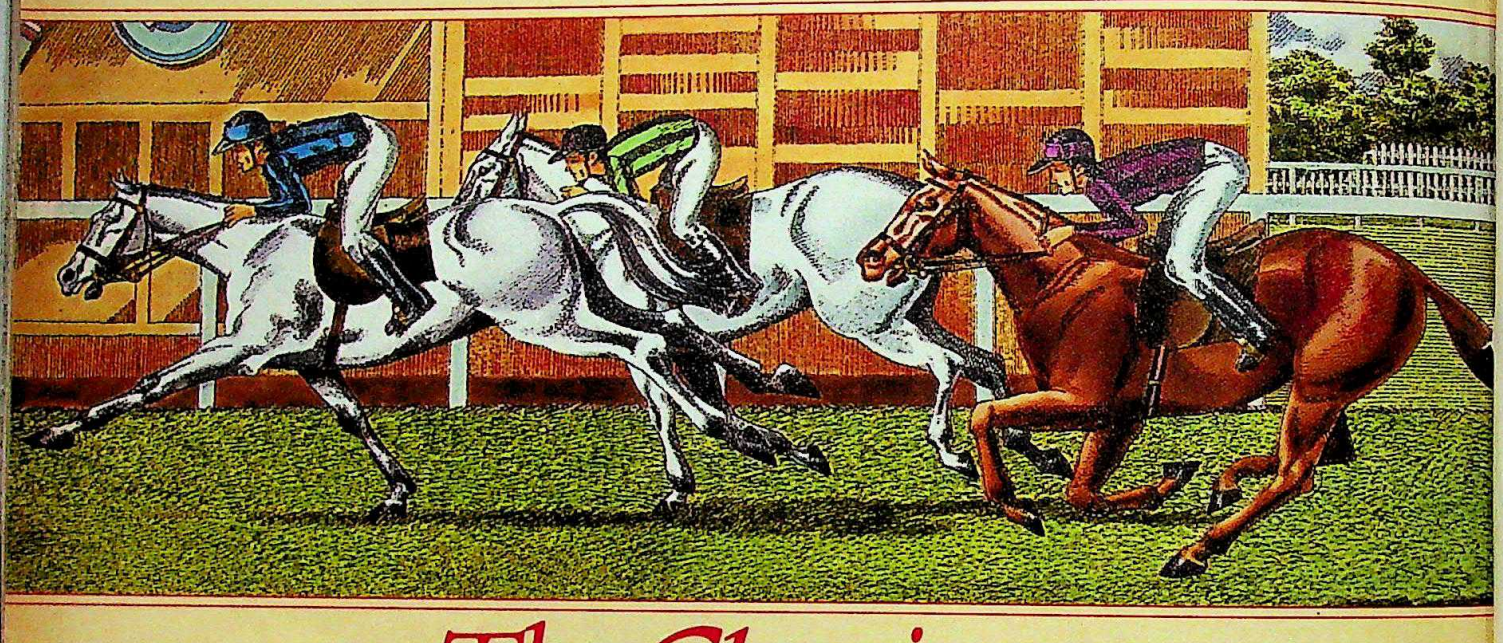

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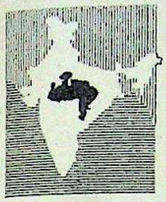
MADHYA PRADESH

Plots Aplenty

Encroachments legalised



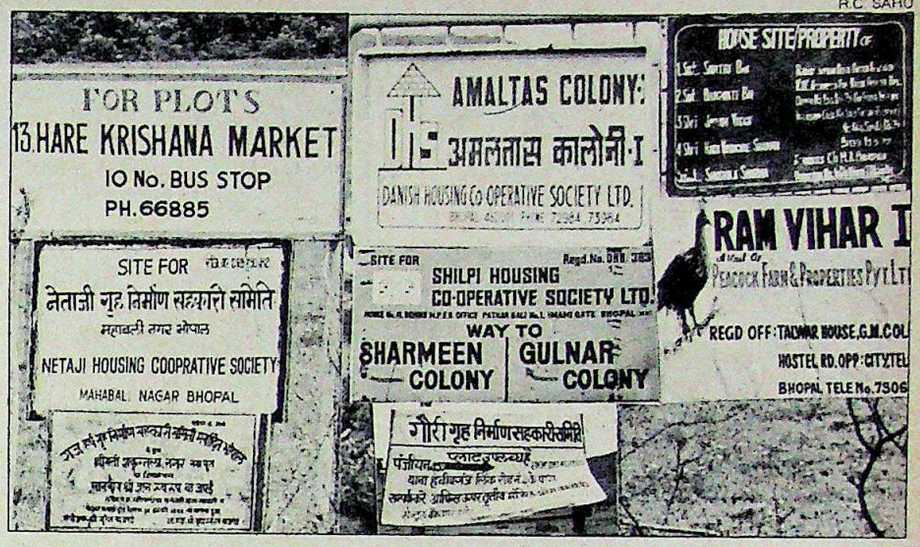
IT's election time and the government machinery is moving at a breath-taking pace. With a stroke of the pen, the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Shyama Charan Shukla, last fortnight legalised all colonies in the state.

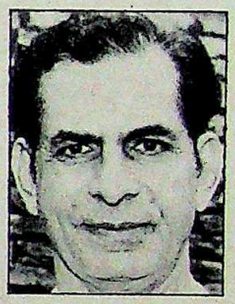
The amendment to the Prevention of Corrupt Practices Act, passed during the recent mini-session of the Assembly, makes a mockery of the master plans of the cities, and according to experts is not intended to help the poor. Says the eminent urban planner, M.N. Buch: "It tells the law-abiding citizens and officers who acted against the illegal colonisers that they are fools."

The Government claims that the illegal colonies have been legalised to help those living in them, "the gullible middle class people who were duped by fly-by-night developers", and to provide basic facilities to the poor.

However, the fact that such moves will only encourage the building of unauthorised colonies has been pushed under the carpet. As Buch says sarcastically: "After this, now the Government should abolish the Town and Country Planning Act." According to real estate businessmen, the decision will, instead of deterring, actually help the fly-

R.C. SAHU





Boards of illegal colonies; and (right) S.C. Shukla

INDIAN POST

Daily Woes

TRUE to form, the troubled Bombay daily, *The Indian Post*, continues to make news rather than publish it. Quite literally, in fact. The newspaper hasn't appeared since January 26 thanks to a battle between the management and staffers.

The management—the Shah family which owns the Ahmedabad-based Gujarati daily, *Gujarat Samachar*—wants to move the newspaper to new premises in central Bombay, ostensibly to honour a commitment made to the erstwhile owners, Vijaypat Singhania's Raymond Group, to vacate the old premises before Republic Day.

The staffers have refused categorically. They say that the new office has little space, only a few typewriters, and minimal furniture—prehistoric stuff for journalists who were used to working on state-of-the-art equipment.

They have now laid siege to the old building, refusing to vacate until "decent" alternative arrangements are made. Declares Jessica Mahadevan, president of the paper's staff association: "It is not possible to bring out the newspaper. We've been denied elementary facilities to produce a quality daily." Last fortnight, the situation turned ugly when a sports correspondent, Ivan Crasto, was allegedly assaulted by security staff outside the building.

The Shahs have a different story to tell. They claim they looked for office space in downtown Bombay—even asking *Post* staffers to help—but could not find anything suitable. Since they had space at an industrial estate in Lower Parel, the heart of Bombay's once-famous textile industry, they wanted the newspaper to move there.

The protest has now spread beyond *The Indian Post*. Journalists from the city took out a morcha and a delegation met Union Information and Broadcasting Minister P. Upendra, who promised help to relaunch the suspended publication. The issue has also gone to court, with journalists arguing that the Singhanias don't have any right to evict *The Indian Post* from its old premises. Reason: the building is owned by the National Textile Corporation which is fighting a court case, claiming the building back from the Singhanias who are the current tenants.

For *The Indian Post*, it seems just another page in a troubled three-year story. Staffers hope the Republic Day issue wasn't the last one—the last *Post*, so to say.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

Staffers' protest march

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by-night colonisers and land sharks, who can now earn mind-boggling profits on lands purchased earlier at throw-away prices. Admits the Bhopal Builders Association President Vinay Agarwala: "The prices of plots in unauthorised colonies have already gone up after the announcement." Demanded Bherulal Patidar, BJP: "Instead of regularising illegal activities, stern action should be taken against those who were minting money by cheating the people."

The accusations gather credence by the fact that the Government appears to have deliberately left enough loopholes in the Act to help the real estate sharks. For instance, the cut-off date fixed for legalising the colonies was December 31, 1989. But till last fortnight the Government had no authentic list of the illegal colonies in the state.

For the outgoing Shukla Government this is not the only scandal that has surfaced during its two-month tenure. Last fortnight Revenue Minister Krishna Pal Singh decided 134 cases of exemption under the Urban Land Ceiling Act involving 2,000 hectares in 125 minutes. Quipped an IAS officer: "It should go in the *Guinness Book of World Records*."

"The undue delay in deciding land ceiling cases has pushed up the land prices in the urban areas," reasons Shukla. But the Government has not been able to pass even one order in these cases because Revenue Secretary A.K. Shrivastava has put his foot down. Argues state Janata Dal General Secretary Vinay Dixit: "The question is not whether money has changed hands. The question is whether it would not affect the very goal of land ceiling—making land available for social housing." The Government, it seems, does not care. —N.K. SINGH

SANJAY SINGH

Fighting Back

HIS body speaks eloquently of the tenacious battle he has fought with death. The jaunty arrogance has been replaced by an almost cherubic innocence. The once-athletic frame is now a bare bag of skin and bones. The slightest gust of wind, it seems, would blow him off.

But appearances can be deceptive. The bullet wounds Sanjay Singh received during the November elections and the long stay in hospitals in Bombay and London may have sapped his strength, but they haven't whittled his standing in state politics. The tumultuous reception the Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal general secretary received on his return to Lucknow on February 1 was evidence of that.

Thousands of supporters greeted him with full-throated cries of "*Sher-e-UP*" (lion of Uttar Pradesh) as he stepped out of the government plane. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav too was there to receive him. A hundred welcome arches lined the route from the airport to his house. And as the Janata Dal's Kranti Rath wound its way home, supporters on both sides of the road showered flowers on it.

The reception, however, was hardly a spontaneous gesture of welcome. It was orchestrated to convey a clear political message: that the Thakur lobby in the Janata Dal ought not to be taken for granted. Thakurs from Varanasi and Sultanpur, from Basti and Gonda, from Rae Bareli and other districts, showed up at the airport. And the banners lining the convoy route were credited to one Singh or the other.

If the Thakurs were organising the welcome, it was because they felt they'd been sidelined. The state Cabinet has just one Thakur on board: Food Minister Diwaker Vikram Singh, a mild-mannered politician who cannot be relied upon to protect Thakur interests. Among the new district Janata Dal office-bearers too, the Thakurs find little representation. Says a Thakur MLA of the erstwhile Lok Dal (A) group: "In the last two months we've felt like mere spectators."

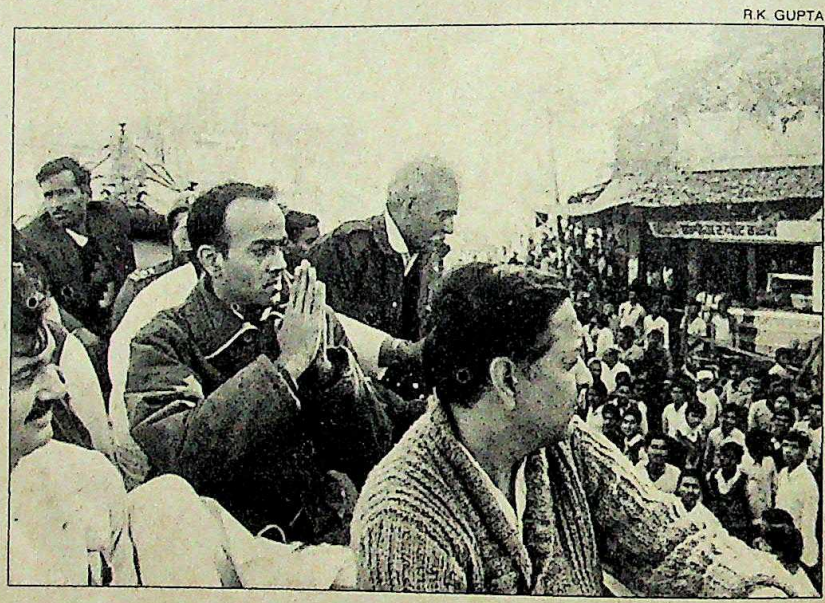
But while the Thakurs have claimed Singh for their own, he himself is clearly in no physical condition to play leader to them—at least not immediately. The two operations he has undergone—including one in London lasting nine hours—necessitate a long period of recuperation. Said he: "I could be back in action after two months of complete rest, but certainly not before that."

When he does return to the political arena, he will have a tough battle ahead of him. In the last election, he lost his assembly seat, so he has to prove to party rivals that he still matters politically. And while there were rumours that he might be made deputy chief minister and even that the chief minister would relinquish the post of state party president for him, there is likely to be opposition. The fact that he has the ear of Prime Minister V.P. Singh—who met him both in New Delhi and in Lucknow—could, of course, ease matters.

Political battles apart, Singh has to resolve questions on the personal front. The CBI has involved him in the murder of badminton star Syed Modi. Singh accuses the bureau of being politically motivated. Says he: "The case is now before the court which will show whether I am innocent or not."

Whatever the court decision, and whatever the obstacles his rivals in the Dal place in his path, Singh is unlikely to yield without a fight. His return from the jaws of death is proof of his powers of survival. —DILIP AWASTHI

R.K. GUPTA



Singh being welcomed: centrestage

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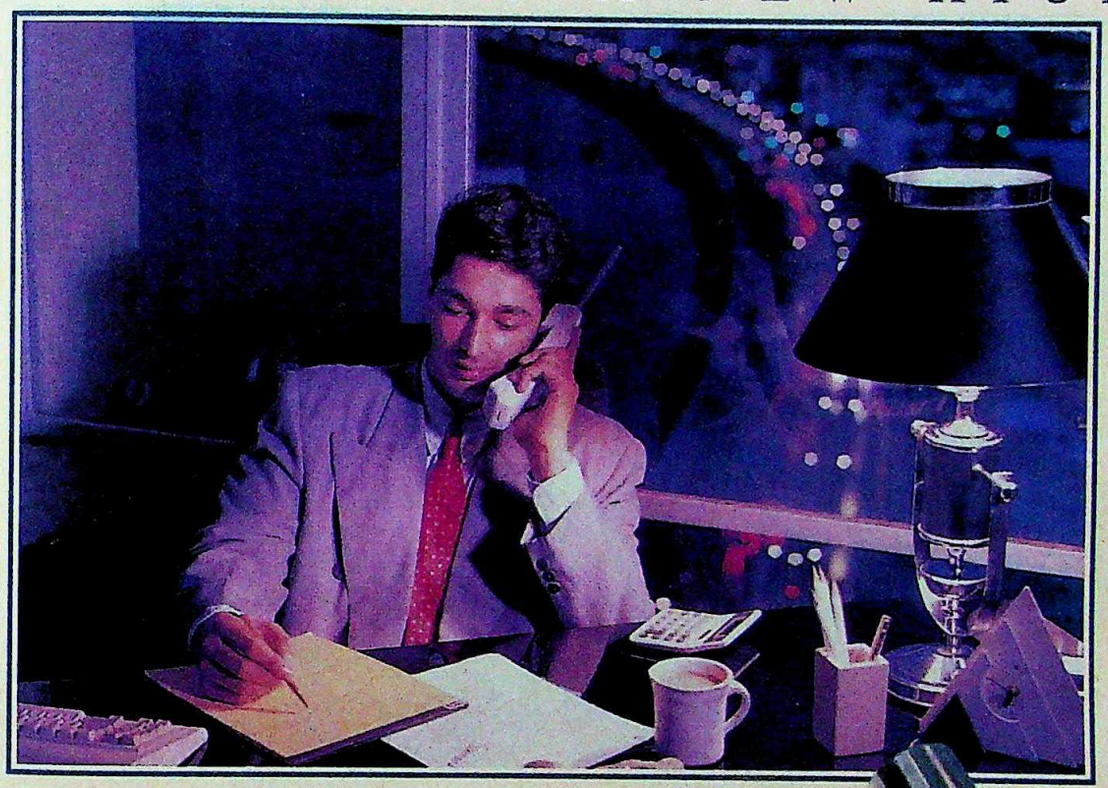

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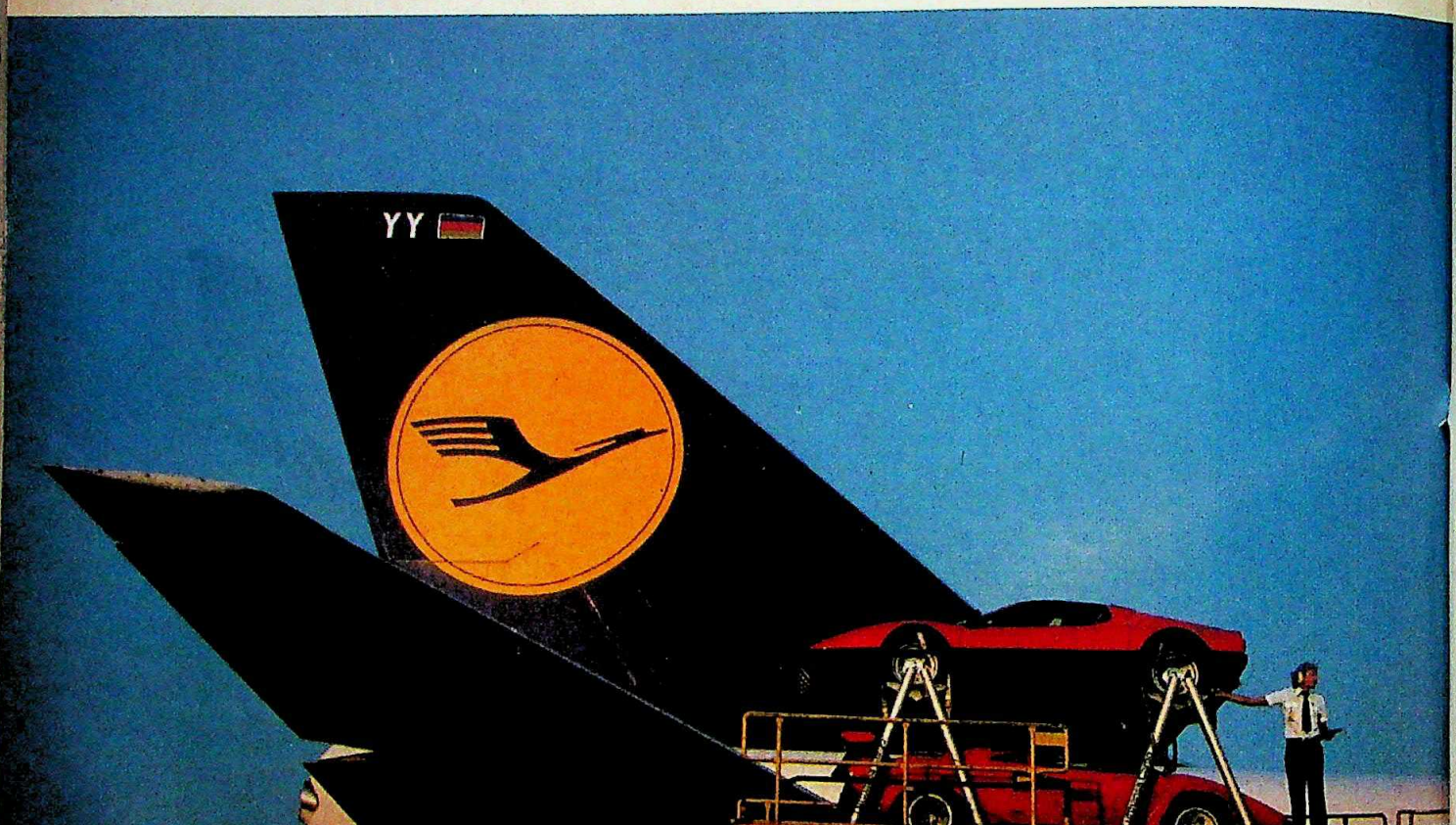

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ASSAM

Facade of Friendship

Uneasy calm between Mahanta and Phukan

WHEN the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhrigu Kumar Phukan stormed into Janata Bhawan, the seat of power in Dispur in 1985, they were described as mighty rhinos. Last fortnight, the two rhinos turned their horns against each other.

But the face-off didn't last long. Realisation dawned that a bout would injure them both, and the hatchet was buried—hands were shaken and regrets expressed to the people for their behaviour. "If the people of Assam are grieved in this matter we beg forgiveness from them," their joint statement announced.

But the calm is only an uneasy one. Infighting is chronic to the AGP Government, dominated as it is by young irrepressible leaders. And but for the fact that this is election year in Assam, the horns would have remained locked. Says Nibaran Bora, 68, the brain behind the six-year pro-Assamese movement which brought the AGP to power: "Mahanta and his team have not learnt how to run the Government nor how to behave in public."

Even if this is not true, behind the hastily put up facade of forget-and-forgive, bitterness continues. Said Home Minister Phukan after the patch-up: "My differences with the chief minister were never personal and I will sort them out within the party. I believe in party discipline and will never go to the press with grievances and also never compromise on the issue of corruption."

Though the infighting came to a boil only recently, the silent battle between the two leaders has caused much resentment within the party and has been eroding the confidence the people had in the AGP. Said a party worker: "They alone would be responsible for the painful demise of the party because people have already become disillusioned to a large extent."

Differences between Mahanta and Phukan, both of whom showed admirable acumen and tenacity during the students movement, had been simmering for sometime. The chief minister suspected that his home minister was growing too ambitious and was garnering support among dissidents to dethrone him. According to AGP sources, Mahanta also had suspicions that Phukan had covert links with the Bodo agitators in the state.

Meanwhile, Mahanta was having a tough time with the Bodo agitation assuming dangerous proportions and allegations of major scandals being made against him. All this was enough grist to the dissident mill. After many conclaves, the dissidents, most of them ministers sacked in a reshuffle in October 1988, had shortlisted the names of Phukan and public works minister Atul Bora as candidates who could take over the chief ministership in case it came to a head-on conflict.

Mahanta, however, displayed his political savvy. When the central executive of the AGP met in July last year he got three dissidents removed from the party, thus delivering a stern message. At the time, it was too early to strike at Phukan who had a clean image and much support. But Mahanta delivered the first open warning in a startling interview to *Natun Dainik*: "The problem is that Phukan sometimes tries to act like a chief minister. The problem with the AGP Government is that every ministry wants to project its own image. Nobody is bothered about the collective image of the Government."

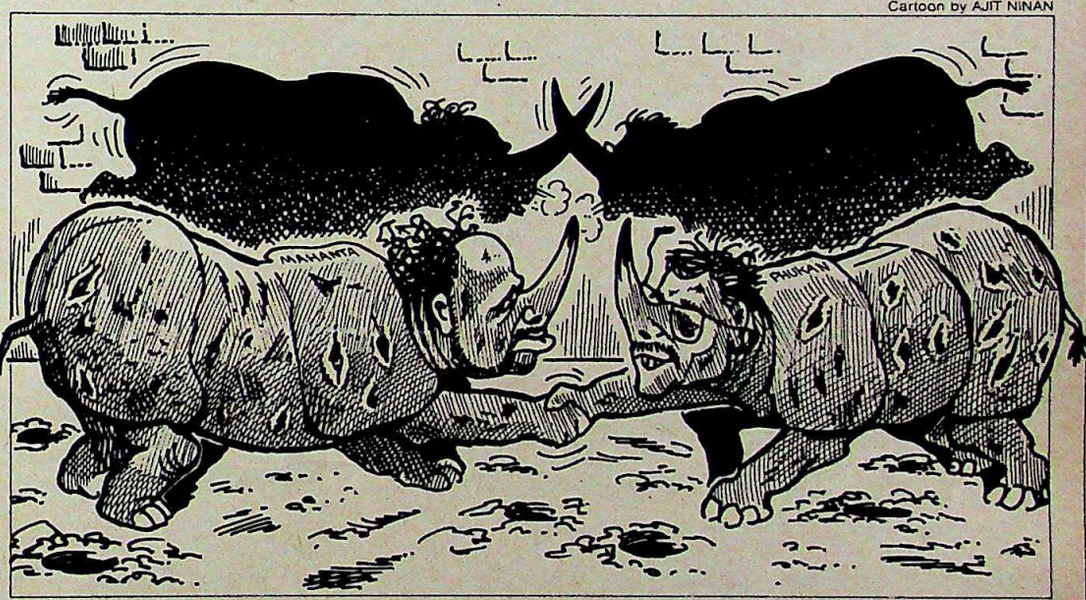
The battle lines were drawn. Mahanta struck once again in January and accused his own home minister of "betraying his trust", held him responsible for the "deteriorating law and order situation" and charged him with "corruption, inefficiency and egoism". Phukan hit back asking Mahanta to prove his charges and to come before the "people's court". Mahanta replied through a letter: "You have gone to the people's court several times during the last four years. This breach of party discipline has harmed the interest of the people."

On January 29, Phukan was stripped of six portfolios—excise, jails, tourism, printing and stationery, passport and hill areas development. And to add to the insult he was given the problematic Assam Accord Implementation portfolio and was not even invited to the swearing-in ceremony. Mahanta made his intention clear by appointing his crony Durgadas Boro as minister of state for home.

All this brickbatting created much anger among party legislators. Education Minister Brindabon Goswami threatened to quit and Minister of State for Health Samsing Hanse sent in his resignation. Said Abhijit Sarmah, MLA: "Let a third person take over the reigns of the Government." It was obvious that the party would be riven from within. This was what forced the two leaders to call off the slanging, and put up a display of solidarity. But the forced friendship may face fresh pressures as the tensions of an election year mount.

—FARZAND AHMED

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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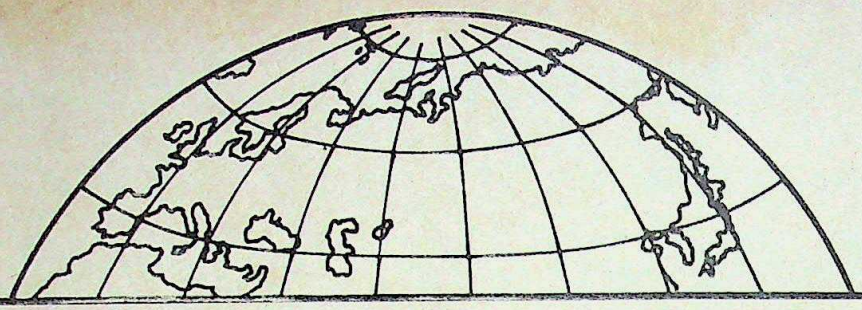

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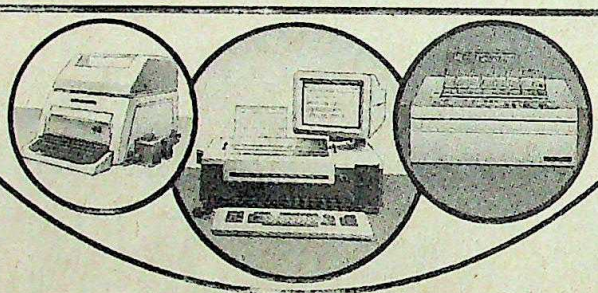

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SHARAD SAXENA

RESERVATIONS

A Brewing Battle

The reservation question is assuming troubling dimensions, and threatens to escalate into a long-drawn conflict

IN town after dusty town across north India, a new graffito can be seen on the walls. No fancy lettering. No artistic pictures. Just one hastily scribbled word: *Aa-ra-ksh-an* (reservation). And crossing it out, two diagonal slash marks. In some places, the slashes are replaced by a question mark.

The medium is crude. But the message it conveys is unambiguous: down with reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. With that slogan on their lips, and backed by brickbats in their hands, anti-reservation agitationists went on a rampage through December and January. It began in a small way in Allahabad but then spread rapidly like a bushfire. To the rest of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar—175 districts in all. Even girls and schoolchildren took to the streets. In most of the affected areas, the Government or local authorities simply shut down educational institutions. Officials in the Union Home Ministry even coined a term for it: "Educational paralysis". Estimates of total damage were not available, but Home Ministry sources put the number of dead at a dozen.

Though the agitation has died down in most states, the resentment against reservations continues to smoulder. In Madhya Pradesh, where nearly all districts were affected, the agitation shows no sign of abating. Says Chief Minister S.C. Shukla whose car was stoned in Bilaspur: "It may lead to a caste war."

It well might. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which draws its support from the backward castes, is preparing to launch a counter-offensive. Kanshi Ram, its leader, fulminates: "This agitation manifests how the minority upper castes still resist change." In terms of votes polled, the BSP is now emerging as the fourth-largest force in the Hindi heartland and it could feed on a caste war to grow far more powerful.

If a confrontation hasn't yet taken place, it is because the anti-reservationists have no cohesive leadership. Nearly everywhere, the movement was led by unorganised youths, with all major political parties opposing the agitation.

Partly, the agitation was born of a misconception. The Government's decision to extend reservation in legislatures by 10 years was taken to be an extension of the job quota. But there was a more important reason for the agitation to surface now. The National Front had, in its election manifesto, promised to implement the Mandal Commission's report "expeditiously" and the agitation was the upper castes' way of demonstrating that the move was unacceptable.

Submitted way back in 1980, the Mandal Commission report identified 3,743 Other Backward Communities (OBC) for whom it recommended reservation in education and jobs in proportion to their numbers. Since the OBCs constitute 52 per cent of the population, this would have taken total reservations to 74.5 per cent (15 per cent of seats are already reserved for Scheduled Castes and 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribes). But the Supreme Court has set a 50-per cent ceiling on reservations, so the Mandal Commission recommended 27.5 per cent reservation for the OBCs.

Expectedly, the report has pitted reservationists against anti-reservationists. Declares Kanshi Ram: "We have a

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one-point programme for the assembly elections: implement the Mandal report as promised." The BSP leader considers the country's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as his own special constituency—and is now seeking to bring the OBCs under his party's umbrella. The Mandal Commission report provides a convenient agitational issue.

For upper caste youths, on the other hand, the report is a red rag. Thousands of them regard even the existing reservation quota as the principal hurdle that stands between them and a seat in a professional college or a government job. Like Kanshi Ram, they have a one-point slogan, only theirs is: "*Aarakshan hatao*" (abolish reservation).

That, of course, won't happen. Every significant political party in the country backs reservation. As does the National Front Government. Says Labour and Welfare Minister Ram Vilas Paswan: "Reservation is a constitutional promise and a national commitment. This agitation is absolutely unjustified."

Nevertheless, under pressure from anti-reservationists, the Government seems to be having second thoughts about implementing the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in toto. It is significant that the chairman of the cabinet committee appointed to look into the report's implementation is Devi Lal, who has openly advocated reservations based on economic status, a stand which contradicts the position of his party and the Government. Devi Lal also wants to restrict reservation to one person per family. "What is wrong with that?" he asks. "Jagjivan Ram too supported this view."

Paswan too says the Government is open to discussion: "The National Front is committed to its promise but it is a national issue and we want a consensus on its implementation."

One reason for taking such a stand is of course that it buys the Government some breathing time. But even otherwise, implementing the Mandal Commission report would create problems. Indeed, it would give rise to new inequities. For instance, the castes that the commission categorises as backward don't have the same status in all states. A caste which is educationally and economically backward in one state may be a land-owning class in another. Says CPI(M) leader Harkishen Singh Surjeet: "A single caste criterion for extending the benefits of reservation to the OBCs is unrealistic. Economic criteria should also be applied."

That could be one of

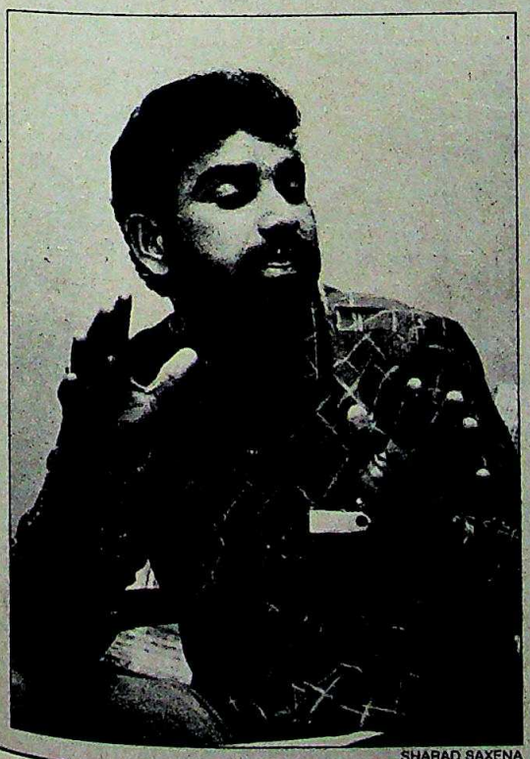
"Not implementing reservations should be a cognisable offence"

CONFRONTATION with the Government is nothing new for Malku Ram, a Harijan inspector-general of police in Bihar. Last month, the Government accused him of delivering virulent speeches at meetings of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Employees Association, whose president he is.

Non-implementation of reservations, Ram says, should be a cognisable offence. And no, it isn't unfair that his children take advantage of reservation. "They studied in the best of schools but still developed an inferiority complex." They used to be taunted, he recalls. "I remember my son returning from school and asking me the meaning of *chamar*," he says.

K.M. KISHAN

"Give them free houses, free education. But why free jobs?"



SHARAD SAXENA

UPPER caste, educated, and unemployed. Twentyeight-year-old Naresh Saxena is the typical anti-reservationist. A resident of Ujhani village of Uttar Pradesh's Badayun district, he has two post-graduate degrees and has done a course in electrical engineering. But after three years of apprenticeship and three years of temporary service with the state Electricity Department, he is again hunting for a job. Reason: when the reserved quota was filled, temporary posts were scrapped. Now, Saxena is president of the Shikshit Yuva Berozgar Sangh in Ujhani. "If the Government wants to uplift the backward castes' status, give them free houses, free education. Why free jobs?" he asks.

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the points discussed by the cabinet committee on the implementation of the Mandal Commission's report when it meets towards the end of February. Whatever its decision, the Government cannot please everyone. If it backtracks on its election manifesto, it will antagonise the backward castes. If it decides to implement the report, it must face the wrath of anti-reservationists. As political dilemmas go, there couldn't be a neater one.

The National Front Government is, of course, not the first one to discover that while making promises is easy, delivering on them is a different story altogether. In 1985, when the Gujarat government announced the implementation of the Rane Commission report—which recommended 18 per cent additional reservation for castes other than the Scheduled Castes—there were widespread riots for weeks on end. Finally, the then chief minister, Madhavsinh Solanki, had to resign.

The arguments against reservation are typical. It results in incompetent engineers, dangerous doctors, inefficient administrators and so on. Because the backward castes are assured of a government job, they do not work hard in school and college. Once in a job, they are assured of promotions and so are sloppy in their work. Says Dr D.N. Desai of the Dharamsinh Desai Institute of Technology in Nadiad, Gujarat: "Reservation has led to tremendous deterioration in the quality of our educational standards, government services and public sector undertakings like electricity boards, airlines and railways."

However, few of these arguments have been substantiated. There are no official statistics analysing the departmental performance of backward caste employees. In fact, officials of the Vigilance Commission—which investigates corruption in government undertakings—say the proceedings against government employees don't show a higher percentage of corruption among backward caste recruits.

Says a divisional commissioner of Uttar Pradesh: "The charge could be partly true of lower grade employees but after reaching grade one, I think there is no difference between reserved category and non-reserved category employees. One of my batchmates of the IAS, who is from the reserved category, has a reputation for being a wizard in revenue matters." Ram Vilas Paswan argues: "A reserved category student can get admission to a medical college on lower marks. But he has to pass the examination to become a doctor. There is no reservation there. Is he more dangerous than a doctor who has virtually bought a degree through a capitation fee?"

More to the point, reservations in educational institutions and jobs serve an important social purpose. They help impart self-respect and confidence to castes which have been suppressed for centuries. That these backward castes still lag behind others educationally and otherwise is evident from one fact: the large number of vacancies in jobs reserved for them. Though 22.5 per cent of government jobs have been reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes since 1951, only about 7 per cent are actually filled. In Uttar Pradesh, which has 20 per cent reservation, just 8.1 per

K.M. KISHAN

R.C. SAHU

Anti-reservation protest in Patna (top) and in Bhopal: caste conflict

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cent of Class I jobs and 18.1 per cent of Class IV jobs are occupied by backward castes.

The reason is that there simply aren't enough candidates qualified for the posts, evidence that reservations in educational institutions too will have to continue for longer to enable the backward castes to compete with others on more equal terms.

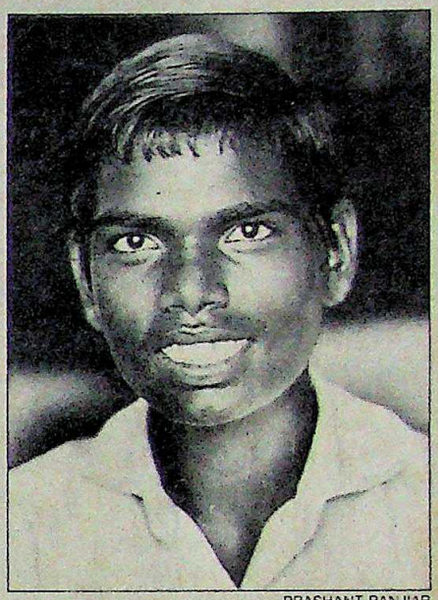
A more serious charge is that reservation helps only a minuscule section of the backward castes: those who live in cities. Since only 16 per cent of the 13 crore members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are urban dwellers and fewer still are educationally qualified for government jobs, reservation clearly touches only the tip of the iceberg.

"God has done so much for him. He will do more"

THANKS to reservations, Jagbir Kataria, 15, will be able to finish school. But that's about as far as he is likely to go.

Two years ago, Jagbir was admitted to a Navodaya Vidyalaya, a free government residential school in the nearby town of Jhajhar under the quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes.

Ram Prasad, his father, is a landless labourer in Haryana's Madina village. He has two daughters to be married and says plainly that he cannot arrange for Jagbir's education once he finishes school. He is quite fatalistic: "I don't have land or money. God has done so much for him. He will do more."



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Roughly 11 crore members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes live in rural areas. A fourth of these are petty farmers who also work in the fields of big landlords. Others carry on their traditional occupations—leather work, weaving, fishing or small handicrafts. All fall outside the ken of the reservation policy. Says P.S. Krishnan, the new secretary in the Welfare Ministry who is in exclusive charge of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Department: "This is where the real challenge lies."

It is also the one area in which successive governments have proved sadly lacking in will. Take land reforms, for instance. As the Mandal Commission itself notes: "Until the stranglehold of the existing production relations is broken through radical land reforms, the abject dependence of the under privileged classes on the dominant higher castes will continue." Harkishen Singh Surjeet bolsters the argument when he points out that because of large-scale land reforms in West Bengal, the anti-reservation problem there is not so acute.

At the Centre and in other states though, it's a different story. In 1951, the Jawaharlal Nehru government identified 51 lakh acres of land as surplus under the land ceiling laws. These were to be redistributed among backward classes to provide them a permanent source of income within the village. But until now, only 17 lakh acres have actually been handed to the landless. What of the rest of the surplus land? Paswan says the landlords continue to own it under *benami* titles, "in the names of pet dogs, cats, parrots and mynas".

Unfortunately, successive governments have chosen to ignore the rural backward castes—the silent majority—opting instead to appease their more vocal urban brethren. That may be electorally expedient. But inevitably the result has been bitter riots and agitations in which the backward castes are often the worst sufferers. The Government would therefore do well to tread softly on the reservation question. With the Kashmir, Punjab and Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid problems already occupying its attention, a caste conflict is the last thing the Union Government would want on its platter of woes.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI
and PHILIP GEORGE
with bureau reports

"There is no escape from reservation in a prejudiced society"

MAHESH BHATT

THE foremost dalit poet in Kannada and currently a nominated member of the Karnataka Legislative Council, Siddalingaiah, 36, feels that things have changed very little since his childhood. "There is no escape from reservation as long as we continue to be a prejudiced, inhuman society," he says.

But reservations, he admits, also lead to piquant situations. Siddalingaih, for instance, is tipped for a professor's post—a reserved one—in the Kannada department of Bangalore University. In the same department, other eminent litterateurs like Chandrashekhara Kambar languish as lecturers and readers. Laments Siddalingaiah: "Not only is he my teacher, he is also more deserving."

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SRI LANKA

Hope on the Horizon

Political analyst Bhabani Sen Gupta recently travelled through the troubled island, and discovered a breeze of cautious optimism blowing through it.

THE clouds of doubts and uncertainties have not drifted away. Blood is still spilled every day. Corpses still burn by the roadside. And politicians still speak in shrill voices, accusing each other for the misfortunes of seven long years.

But with all that, a breeze of hope blows over the much-afflicted island of Sri Lanka. In muffled voices, people you meet in hotel lobbies, supermarkets and corridors of power tell you that they believe and hope that the worst is over, and that 1990, will bring peace to the self-battered country.

The most hopeful man is President Ranasinghe Premadasa, plebian-politician, poet and novelist. Seven months ago, I found him a beleaguered President, besieged by country-wide violence and a high-tension quarrel with the Indian Government, triggered by his demand that the IPKF must go home by the end of July 1989. Revolutionary militants of the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) were virtually running Sri Lanka; a sense of despair afflicted cadres of the ruling United National Party (UNP).

Now, Premadasa seems to have turned the corner. Most JVP leaders have been liquidated or taken in custody. The LTTE is now an ally of his government, and will soon take control of the Northern and Eastern provinces. The IPKF, reduced to 20,000 from 45,000 in July, will be fully withdrawn before March 31. All universities have opened after three years. Strikes no longer cripple the island. Tourists from Scandinavia and Germany have resumed their travel to the pearl island; and Americans too are coming.

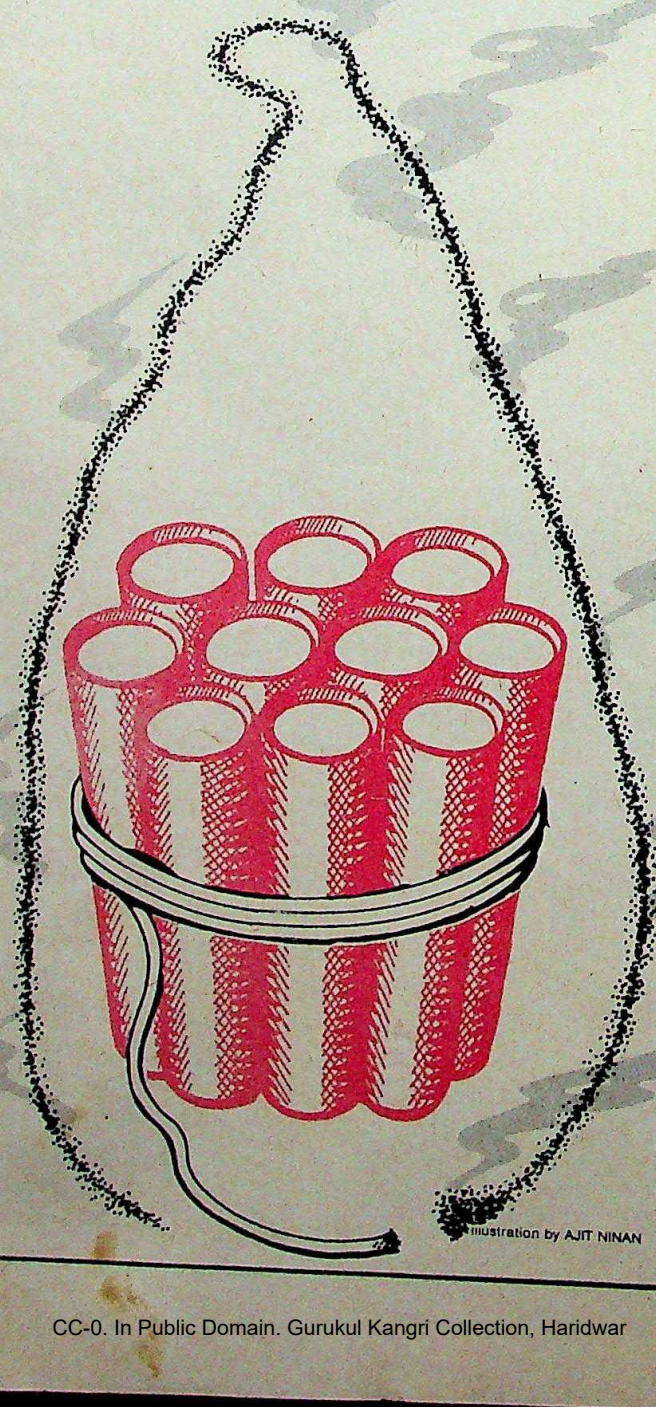
The aid consortium has released an instalment of $ 87 million, lifting the worst-ever crunch of foreign exchange. Confidence has begun to return to the stock exchange. A company in South Korea has just bought a state-owned textile mill at Thulhiriya, showing the restoration of the international business community's confidence in Sri Lanka's viability as a nation-state. The paradise, after all, is not falling apart.

"It is all because of our policy of inclusiveness," declared a beaming Premadasa when I, along with two other visiting Indian scholars, met him in Colombo. Flanked by foreign policy aides, Premadasa claimed that the turnaround was the happy off-spring of his 'humane' approach. The security forces were 'kind' to captured JVP cadres who gave information that led them to the top leaders. Said Premadasa: "They are our people, we have driven them to violence and rebellion. We must bring them back to the democratic mainstream."

"The IPKF came into Sri Lanka to make peace between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. It failed. But we have ourselves made peace with the IPKF! Why did we do that? Because the Tamils are our people. The Sinhalas and Tamils must live in peace in Sri Lanka, which is their common motherland. Who can blame us for making peace with our own people?"

Premadasa was certain that there would be no serious bloodshed in Jaffna when the IPKF was gone. "The IPKF has withdrawn from six of the eight districts of the Eastern Province. Has there been a bloodbath? The LTTE has taken over peacefully. It will be the same in Jaffna. The ERPLF leaders will either run away to Tamil Nadu or come to Colombo."

Will the Sri Lanka Army take on the Tamil Tigers and 'finish them off'? "No!" roared Premadasa. He brushed aside a suggestion that the 100,000-strong Sri Lankan Army was now an autonomous force. "The army will return to the barracks when its job is finished. At a certain point of time, the LTTE will have to surrender its arms." He was in no great



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hurry. "We shall settle all matters between ourselves. When there is trust between two parties, when they understand one another, it is not difficult to resolve differences," said Premadasa.

WHAT was the magic of this sudden 'understanding'? Did the LTTE abandon its demand for Eelam? Will the Sinhalese agree to give the Tamils an autonomous homeland? Will devolution proceed after the IPKF leaves? To these questions, the President was positive. If the Tamils demanded Eelam, it was because "we failed to recognise and accommodate their legitimate aspirations on time". There was no going back on devolution. The merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces would not be undone by presidential flat. It would be put to the test of referendum as agreed to between Sri Lanka and India. Not in April; the referendum had been postponed to June.

How did he expect the JVP cadres and followers to behave after the liquidation of most of their leaders? "We have to bring these young people into the democratic mainstream," said he. "They are the cream of our society. Our own people."

Premadasa, who cares little for degree and pedigree, said he had set for himself three principal goals: a fair and just deal for the minorities, winning over the deviant youth and a massive anti-poverty programme. "We have made Tamil an official language of Sri Lanka, thus giving it parity with Sinhala. We have begun to recruit Tamils and Muslims to the provincial police force for the Northern and Eastern provinces and we shall soon recruit Tamils for the armed forces." Will the Sinhala community, the Buddhist monks and the opposition parties concede true autonomy to the Tamils and acknowledge Sri Lanka to be a multi-ethnic society? "I would say, yes, but may be not all at once. The whole country is tired of bloodshed. I do not find the Sinhala community rejecting multi-ethnicity any more. If the political party in power is firm, it can win over the people," the President said.

Not everyone else of the more than 100 people I talked to in Colombo shared this optimism. But, by and large, I found a consensus on three issues. First, there will be no major blood-letting after the exit of the IPKF. If peace did not prevail between the LTTE and the Government in Colombo, there would be what a cabinet minister described as "armed peaceful co-existence". Secondly, it will take years for the leaderless JVP cadres to find their political moorings. This will give the Government time and space to launch its programme to win over a segment of the alienated youth. And, thirdly, the military will remain non-political. Sri Lankan democracy is not in danger.

But the economy is. The $87 million of consortium aid was a timely shot in the arm, but hardly more than just that. The UNP's claim that a free market economy would boost the growth rate proved to be false after an initial hopeful beginning—in 1986, the economy grew at a low pace of 4.5 per cent, almost the same rate of growth it had seen in 1977 (4.3 per cent) when the UNP came to power. In 1987 and 1988, the economy crawled at the growth rate of 1.6 and 2.5 per cent. When one takes into account the inflation rate of 18-22 per cent since 1988, Sri Lanka has been caught in the coils of negative growth.

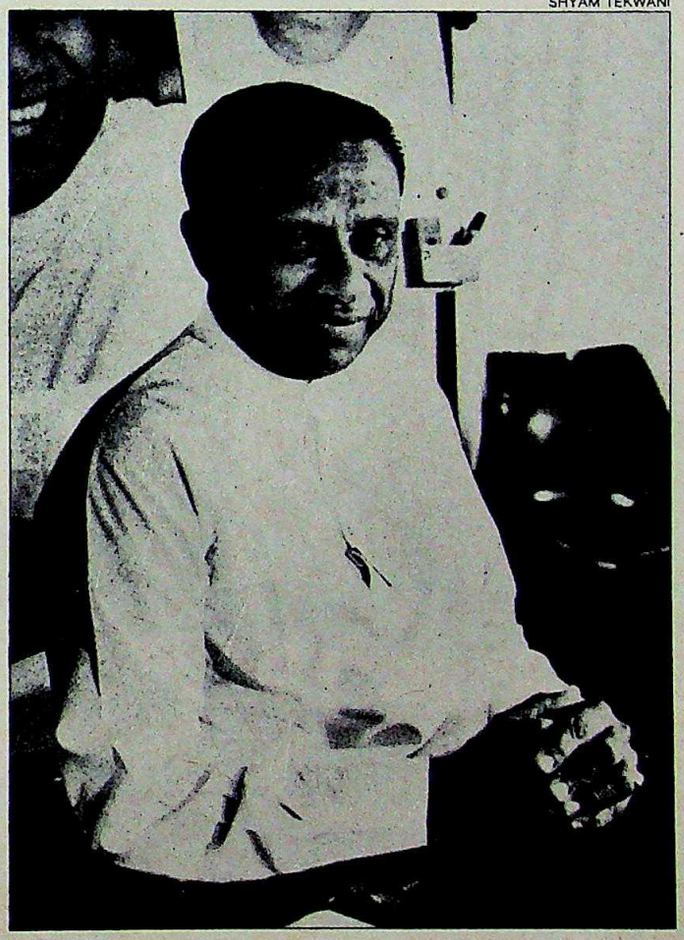
Over a quarter of its export earnings goes in servicing foreign debt. It faced even in 1988, a deficit of SDR 324 million in its balance of payment. It is now much larger. Partly on its own, partly under IMF and World Bank pressure, the UNP Government has heavily slashed subsidies for education and food (in 1980, food subsidies came to a mere 0.5 per cent of the GNP, while it used to be 4.6 per cent in 1973).

But at this time, the blackest spot on this government is the reckless killings going on in the countryside. Burning bodies are thrown on roadside in the sight of people who are too afraid to remove them. The Government's *Daily News*, reported 615 killings in 14 days of December.

The Government pretends not to know who are sending out the death squads, though Premadasa did acknowledge that most of them could have been of the army. People, however, know that the army is taking revenge on the JVP armed cadres who had started 'finishing off' families of men serving with the armed forces. The killings horrify the people of Sri Lanka and also deaden their sensibilities about man's brutalities to man. "There has been, there is, too much bloodshed in this country," observed a young journalist. "We just can't do anything about it. We are thankful to be alive."

International civil human rights organisations, however, have begun to take notice, and the first protests have come from Amnesty International. In an angry over-reaction, which he may have to regret soon, Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne described Amnesty International as a "terrorist organisation" and warned it against interfering in Sri

SHYAM TEKWANI



Seven months ago Premadasa was under siege; today he is the most hopeful man on the island.

- *"We've begun to recruit Tamils and Muslims to the police force for the Northern and Eastern provinces."*
- *"We must bring the JVP back to the mainstream."*
- *"The Sinhalas and Tamils must live in peace in Sri Lanka, which is their motherland."* —PREMADASA

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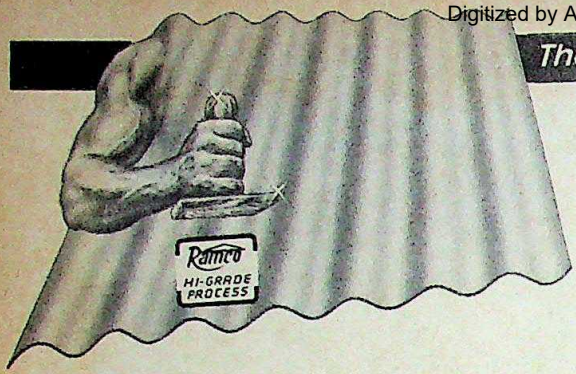

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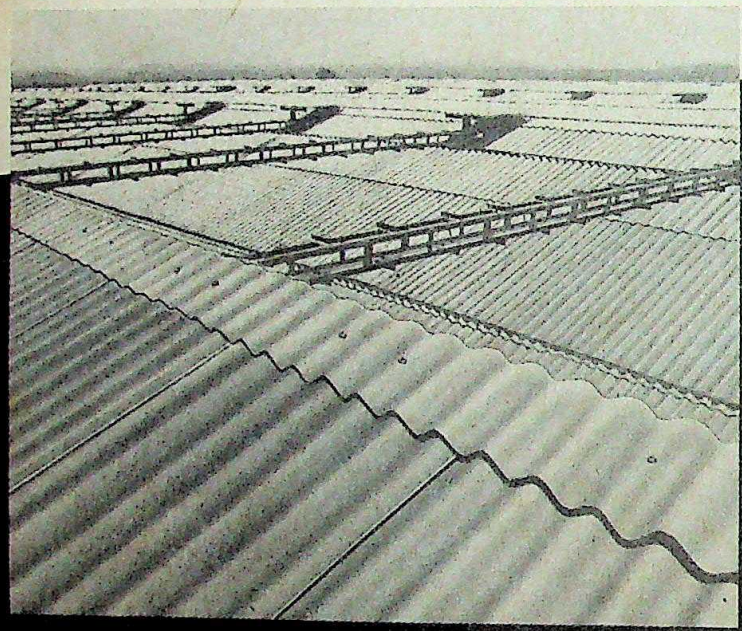

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The blackest spot on this government is the reckless killings in the countryside.

- *"There's been too much violence. Thankfully we're alive."* —*A Journalist*
- *"The whole country is tired of bloodshed. I do not find the Sinhala community rejecting multi-ethnicity any more."* —PREMADASA
- *"For many Indians there is an India above all communities and clans; this is what we lack in Sri Lanka."* —KARTHIGESU SIVATHAMBI, *professor*

Lanka's internal affairs. Industry Minister Ranil Wickremsinghe charged the organisation with 'funding' the JVP. Both these heavyweights in Premadasa's Cabinet apparently overlooked a significant aspect of international change. Aid donors of Sri Lanka in 1990 are mainly the Scandinavians and West Germany, not the traditional leaders like the US, Britain and France. The West Europeans are keenly human rights conscious—they will not pour money into the coffers of governments who have a poor human rights record.

A visitor from New Delhi to Colombo in January 1990 could not but be impressed with the sudden change for the better in Sri Lankan sentiments for India. "We trust the new Government in Delhi," declared Premadasa, and almost mirrored the feeling of the vast majority of his people. His government is convinced the IPKF will be totally withdrawn by March 31. "The National Front Government has assured us that the withdrawal is unconditional, and we are happy about it," said Premadasa.

THE fears of a Tamil massacre at the hands of the LTTE, which are being spread in India by EPRLF and Congress(I) elements, are hardly echoed in Colombo. Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranayake herself does not seem to have such fears. She told me at a dinner that her party, the SLFP, stood for devolution in the north and the east, though not in the south. Mrs Bandaranayake is under pressure to hand over to a younger political leadership, and the SLFP, with its small presence in Parliament and its orgainsational crisis, is getting marginalised, like the other traditional opposition parties in Sri Lanka politics. Aware of this, Premadasa would like to realign the political forces with bridges built between himself, the JVP cadres and supporters who may be willing to return to mainstream politics, and even the LTTE if it gave up its demand for Eelam.

Sri Lankans are still unduly concerned with the Tamil Nadu factor in their relations with India. Astonishing is the Sri Lankan ignorance of the internal dynamics of Indian politics, especially the dynamics of India's north-south political equations. Karthigesu Sivathambi, professor of Tamil at Jaffna University, is a rare Tamil scholar who has been trying to explain the wounded Tamil psyche to Sinhala audiences. The Sinhala stuck to his conventional images of Tamils in India, he said, which can be removed only with much wider contacts between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu at the level of peoples, not politicians. Sri Lankans still think in terms of their communities and religions, said Sivathambi. "Indians do too, but for many Indians there is an India above all communities and clans; this is what we lack in Sri Lanka," he adds. But things have begun to change, and Sinhala intellectuals now see Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic society. Sivathambi feels

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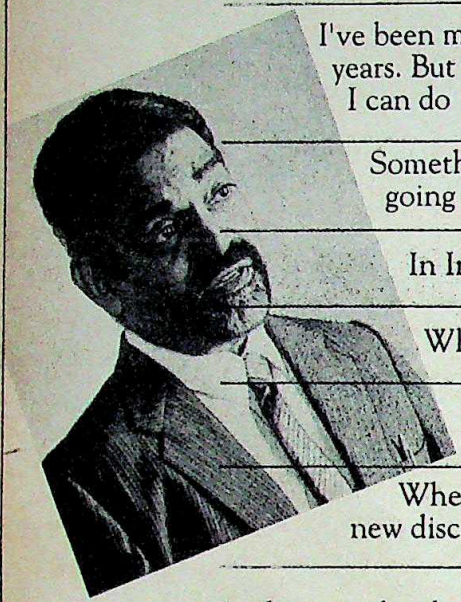

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SHYAM TEKWANI

The attitude to India has changed, and will perhaps improve once the IPKF pulls out.

- *"You do not know how to count your success."*
  —*A Sri Lankan diplomat on India's role*
- *"We trust the new Government in Delhi."* —PREMADASA
- *"We intend to work with India to lend vigour and competitiveness to our trade."*
  —GAMINI DESSANAYAKE, *minister*

the sentiment will also begin to filter down to the Sinhala masses.

The attitude to India is now relaxed. Premadasa is looking forward to wide-ranging economic relations with India after the IPKF pull-out. Said he: "We must work together, do things together, and you will see this happen." His Minister for Plantation Industry, Gamini Dessanayake, a young man of considerable talent and abilities and with a future in Sri Lanka politics, told me that he was waiting for the Indian Commerce Minister, Arun Nehru's response to a request for a meeting. "We intend to work with India to lend vigour and competitiveness to tea exports from our two countries," he said.

One reason why Sri Lankans are ready to turn to India more now than in the past is that almost every significant power—the US, the USSR, China and Britain—have been telling the Government since 1987, not to quarrel with India but to work with it.

The end of the Cold War has already diminished Sri Lanka's importance in the eyes of the world powers. The Americans are not interested in Trincomalee; no one has shown any interest in reconstructing the oil storage tanks there since India made it an issue in the summer of 1987. The VOA facilities in Colombo remain unused. The Cold War customers have lost their appetite for bases and facilities, for clients in far-flung regions of the Third World.

As the IPKF leaves, the LTTE is fully armed and will be in control of Jaffna and Trincomalee. Is that a failure of the Indian peace-keeping intervention? Yes, but that's not the whole Sri Lanka story. The IPKF has brought Colombo and the LTTE together, which was one of the chief objectives of India's Sri Lanka diplomacy. "You do not know how to count your success," commented a Sri Lankan diplomat wrily.

India has helped Sri Lankans realise the multi-ethnicity of their country and the imperatives of living peacefully together. Above all, Sri Lankans have learnt that India is their only neighbour except the endless waters of the oceans. This point was made with considerable finesse by the new Indian Ambassador, L.L. Mehrotra, who, unlike his "vice-royal" predecessor, is well regarded by Sri Lankans. India can be happy with these sweet returns of its Sri Lanka diplomacy, taking them along with the bitter pills of failure, and proceed to rebuild the relationship with greater sensitivity for Sri Lankan fears and doubts and greater regard for the dignity and zest for independence of a small nation that until recently occupied a distinctive place among third world countries with its excellent record of education, health and nutrition. Indians must never forget that Sri Lankans are a very proud people: the word Sinhala comes from *simha*, lion.

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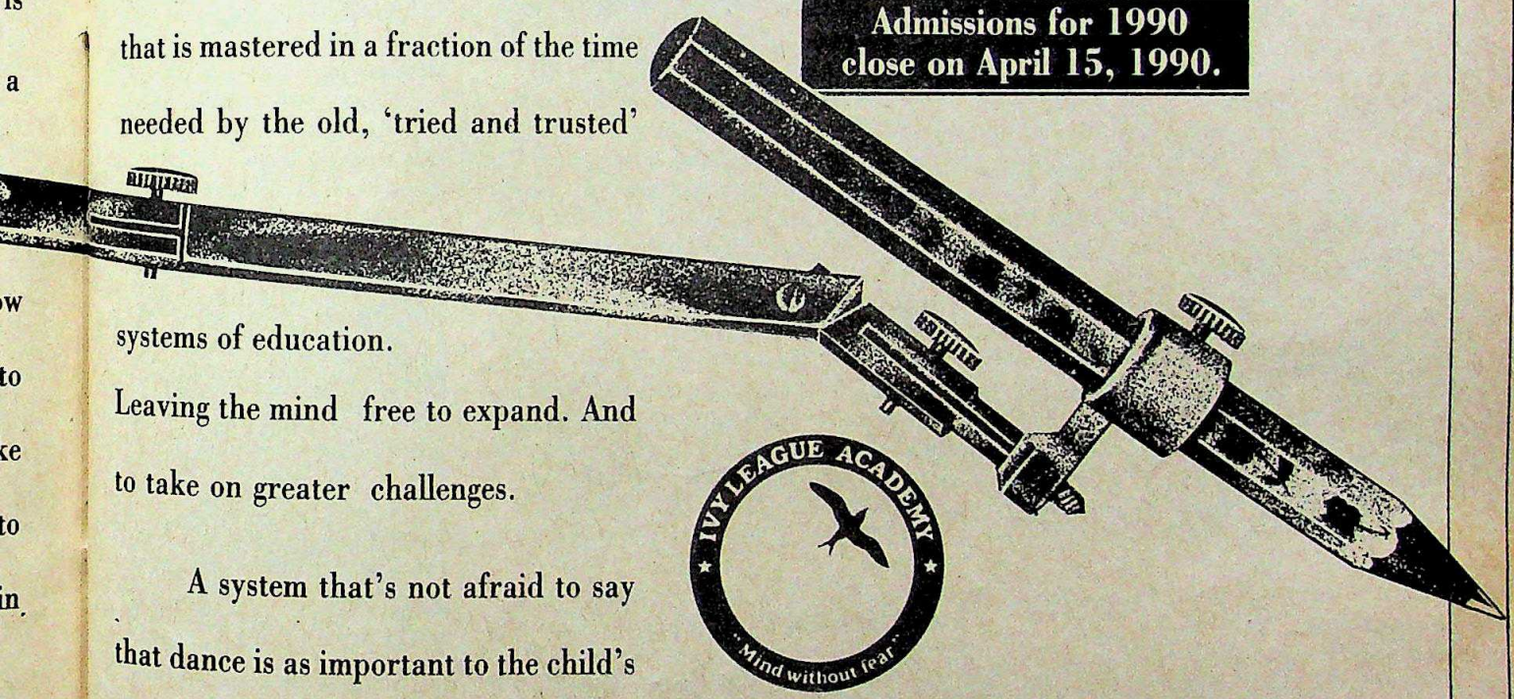

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BIHAR

Raising a Stink

● WITH assembly elections around the corner, the battle lines have been firmly drawn. In Bihar, Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra has provided the Janata Dal with a poll issue by writing off over Rs 20 crore due from the Tatas as cess for leased land in Jamshedpur. The amount had become a bone of contention between the Government and the Tatas. Worse, the Mishra Government has now even exempted the Tatas from paying further cess.

The Tatas argue that since they had made arrangements for the supply of land and water and built roads in Jamshedpur, there was no reason why they should pay the cess. Predictably, the Janata Dal—which described the deal as a

BHAWAN SINGH

Mishra: under fire

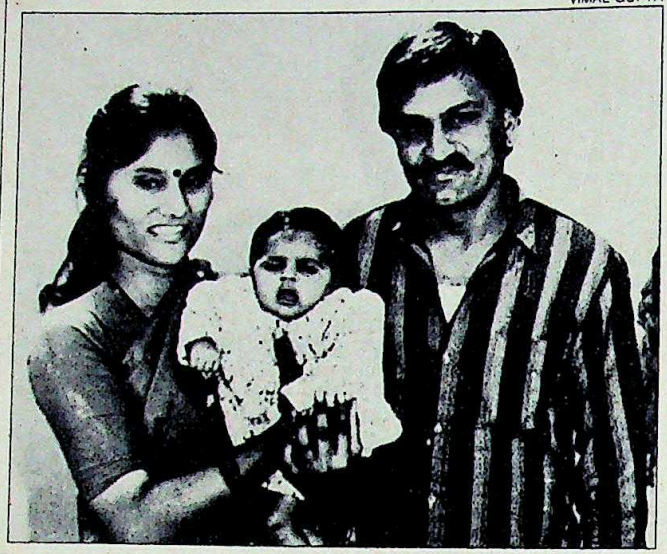
sell-out—is drawing political mileage from the issue. Critics say that going by the Tatas' reasoning anybody can refuse to pay the cess on the ground that power and water supply did not exist on the land or were not being made available.

Besides, Rs 20 crore over 35 years is a mere pittance for the industrial house which enjoys the lease of land in Jamshedpur at preferential rates that are ludicrously low at Rs 16 per acre per annum. But Mishra denies that it was a political decision. Says he: "The decision was taken to encourage more investment by the Tatas." Whether the people are convinced or not, only the poll results will tell.

MADHYA PRADESH

A Final Vindication

VIMAL GUPTA



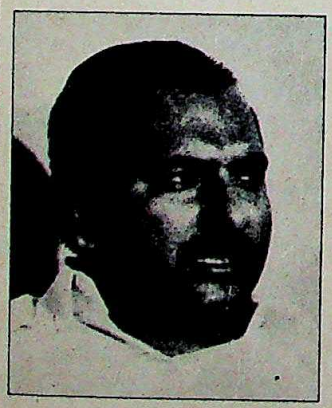
Induprabha and Radheshyam with their baby: determined

● REMEMBER Induprabha, the 23-year-old runaway Jain nun, who renounced the order in 1987, leading to a law and order problem in Indore? The comely nun had eloped with a milkman, Radheshyam. But her community insisted she was abducted. The subsequent furore led to morchas, a habeas corpus writ, a judicial inquiry and Radheshyam's detention. But the agitation flickered out when the high court ruled she was not illegally detained.

Last month, Induprabha, who has been living with the already-married Radheshyam in Indore, gave birth to a girl. "This baby is my answer to those who allege I was abducted," she says, adding: "The case is as good as over now. The inquiry commission farce should stop." Clearly, she has never regretted her decision. "For a woman, the real bliss of life is in motherhood," she says.

KERALA

Candidature Wars



Antony: victorious

● KERALA PCC(I) President A.K. Antony and his camp had good reason to rejoice last fortnight. He had emerged the victor in the tug of war with the faction of former chief minister K. Karunakaran. The issue: selection of the Haripad by-election candidate. While Antony had plumped for Youth Congress(I) leader M. Murali, Karunakaran had wanted K.C. Venugopal, Kerala Students' Union president.

The election is viewed as a prestigious one. And the Antony camp lost no opportunity to stress that the choice has significance. Before the Lok Sabha elections, Karunakaran managed to get tickets for his favourites, and made it clear that he called the shots.

Now it's Antony's turn to preen himself for being the man in-charge.

TAMIL NADU

Name of the Game

● NAMING buildings and roads is a serious business in Tamil Nadu. Example: the ongoing tussle between the DMK and the state Congress(I) over the renaming of the suburban station in Maraimalai Nagar.

The Congress(I) wants the station—set up when the AICC(I) held its session last year in the township—to be named after Kamaraj. But the DMK Government refuses to play ball. It wants to call it Maraimalai Nagar station—like the area—after Tamil scholar Maraimalai Adigal.

And now comes a fresh controversy. At the request of Chief Minister Karunanidhi, Prime Minister V.P. Singh benevolently announced in Madras last fortnight that Madras Airport would be named after two state leaders, Annadurai and Kamaraj.

Obviously, an important

BHAWAN SINGH

Karunanidhi: confounded

fact had been overlooked: there was only one airport, but two names. To name the airport after only one of the leaders would provoke one section. A way out of the unholy mess was to give a name each to the airport's two terminals. But this is likely to confuse passengers especially as more terminals are slated to come up.

The other alternative is to call it the Anna-Kamaraj airport. At a press meet, Karunanidhi jocularly defended himself, quipping: "God is called by several names too." Meanwhile, the dilemma continues to confound.

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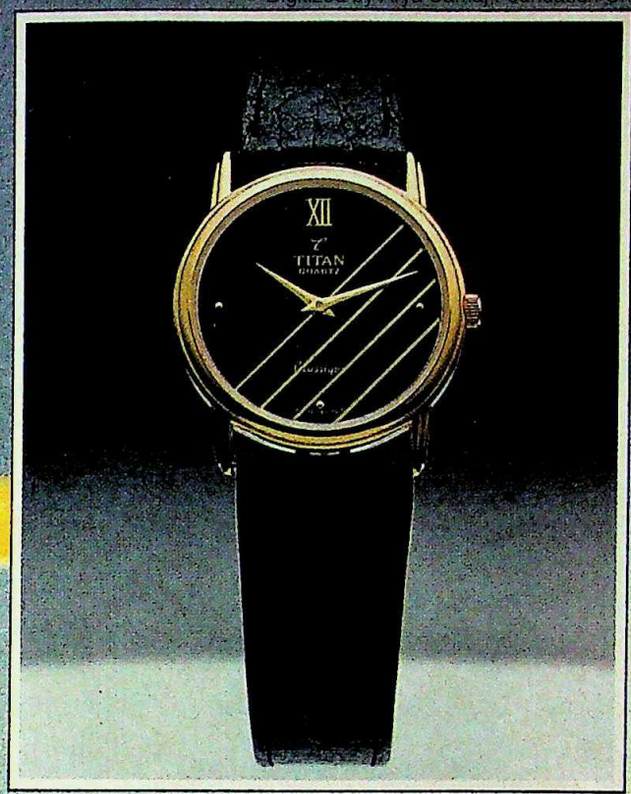

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SMUGGLING

The Fatal Attraction

Ingenious methods devised to bring in gold

SOMETIME last month, Moindeen Angakkalari—owner of a small cigarette shop in Bombay's Bhendi Bazaar—got an offer he could not refuse. For carrying a suitcase with a few video cassettes from Dubai to Trivandrum, he was promised, apart from his passage, a tempting sum of Rs 10,000.

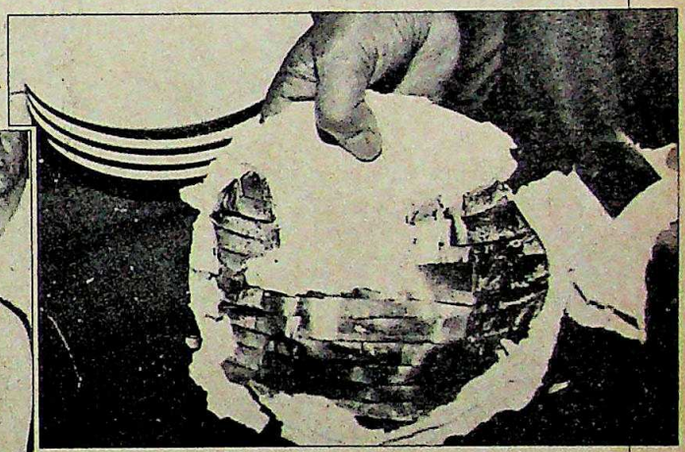
On January 27, Moindeen flew to Trivandrum directly from Dubai. It all appeared so simple—no one would ever suspect that the video cassettes contained gold. But he had not reckoned with the sharp customs officials at the airport. A look at the cassettes triggered off their suspicions. Five of them were prised open and 201 gold biscuits weighing 23.5 kg, worth Rs 76.10 lakh, fell out. And for his efforts, Moindeen received a jail term.

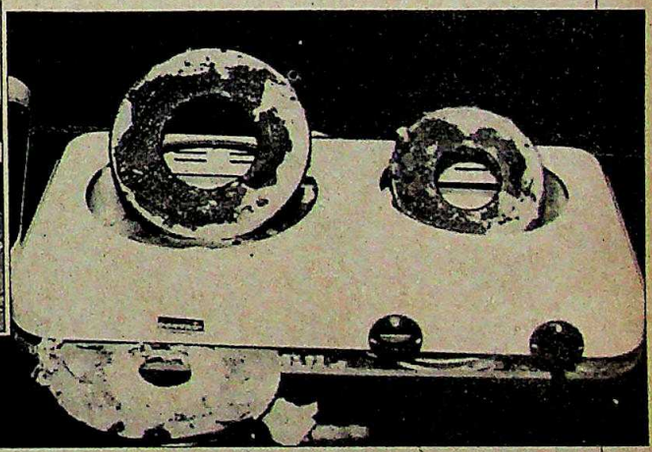
But for the customs officials at terminal two of the Trivandrum airport—which receives international passengers—it was all in the day's work. Gold smugglers have been increasingly resorting to ingenious methods. Since the metal is pliable, it can easily be moulded into any shape. In the past one year, the officials have found smuggled gold in the form of buttons, keys, suitcase wheels and frame, machinery parts, belt hooks, umbrella rods, hair pins, even paper-thin letters in stamped envelopes.

Says A.K. Govindankutty, superintendent of customs: "We discover one method; and the smugglers come up with four others. They are an imaginative lot." Adds K.M. Nair, assistant collector, customs: "We have to be equally imaginative to catch them."

For instance, Mohammed Hussein Mohammed Mumtaz had stored away 521 gm of gold, worth Rs 1.56 lakh, where he thought no one would ever look. Two gold biscuits were inserted in his rectum and the rest, made into small balls, were swallowed with bananas so that the sharp edges would not tear his intestines. But even that could not pass muster. Following sustained interrogation, Mumtaz broke down. He was kept at the airport for a fortnight till he was purged of every piece of gold. Further investigations showed that he was just a carrier for Sri Lanka-based smugglers.

Apart from passengers, customs officials have also been carefully screening the cargo. An air-conditioner was found to have been specially designed to hold 40 rods of gold worth over Rs 28.40 lakh. A steel box contained 40 neatly packed gold biscuits worth Rs 14 lakh. An unusual case was that of a melamine dinner set with thin strips of gold worth Rs 5.25 lakh packed between two layers. Says V.K. Agarwal, customs collector: "The Trivandrum airport has seen smugglers bringing in gold in every conceivable shape."





(Clockwise from top): Gold smuggled in cassettes; dinner set; and gas stove

For obvious reasons, Gold smuggling is a lucrative proposition—the price of a kilogram of 24 carat gold is around Rs 3.25 lakh in India, while the international price is just Rs 2 lakh. Says intelligence officer Mitra Prasad: "Gold will continue to be smuggled in. Only the modus operandi will change."

Most of the smuggling is by organised syndicates run by Malayalee gangsters based in Dubai, Muscat, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. However, the carriers are poor Gulf Malayalees who have been rendered jobless with the dying out of the Gulf boom. Take the case of Parameswaran Pillai who lost his job in Dubai, but did not want to return to a poverty-ridden existence in Quilon.

For some, it is circumstances that push them to become carriers, when they cannot even buy a return ticket. Yet others resort to smuggling gold individually. Abdul Latif from Chavakad, who earned a handsome salary as a clerk in Abu Dhabi, pooled his savings and even borrowed money to buy 11 gold necklaces worth Rs 3.75 lakh to bring back home. He split a cotton quilt, spread the gold chains out and restitched the quilt, hoping to walk past the customs with ease. But it was not to be so.

Notwithstanding the customs seizures and the publicity the cases receive, customs official do not foresee a drop in the smuggling rate. For the many desperate Parameswarans and Latifs, and for those gangsters who push them to the brink, the glitter of gold remains a fatal attraction.

—RAMESH MENON

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CAR IMPORTS

Wheeling Dealing

A massive duty evasion racket is unearthed

UNTIL three years ago, if an Indian returning from abroad wanted to import a foreign car, he had to go through a tedious procedure—filling innumerable forms, getting clearances from various authorities, wading through a bureaucratic swamp. Most found it too exasperating. It was simpler to drive an Ambassador.

In 1988, all that changed. The Government did away with most of the cumbersome procedures. All you needed to import a car was a Customs Clearance Permit (CCP). And to get a CCP, you had only to show that you were employed abroad and had enough money in your bank to buy a car. Expectedly, the number of imported cars went up substantially.

But the easing of rules hasn't just made imports easier for genuine car buyers. As the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Bombay Zone, is discovering, it has also spawned a gigantic scam involving evasion of customs duty worth crores of rupees. Interestingly, all the cases involve the Audi, the car presented to Ravi Shastri when he was chosen Champion of Champions in the World Series Cricket tournament in Australia five years ago. By early January, the DRI had already seized 11 Audis and the search is on for 31 more which are believed to have evaded as much as Rs 5 crore in customs duty, which works out to about Rs 12 lakh apiece.

The duty evaders used two methods. The first was to underrate the capacity of the imported car. All the Audis declared that they had a capacity of 1,595 cc and produced a letter from the manufacturer, Volkswagen, on a plain piece of paper stating that the cars had a capacity below 1,600 cc.

Why the odd figure of 1,595 cc? The reason is simple. According to the import rules, cars with an engine capacity below 1,600 cc attract one rate of duty. Cars with a higher capacity fall in a higher duty slab.

After seizing the cars, Moheb Ali, deputy director of the DRI in Bombay, had the cars examined by an automobile engineer who certified that the engine had a capacity of 1,800 cc.

Audis seized by the DRI; and (inset) Ali

The other tactic to evade duty was to undervalue the imported cars. According to documents presented to the customs authorities, the cars, along with their accessories, had been bought for about Deutschmark 30,000 (Rs 2,60,000). The customs authorities say the value is much higher.

Javed Gaya, a solicitor who has been representing some of the Audi car owners, has an explanation. Says he: "There are two price lists: one is for Germans who get the car at ex-factory price plus the value-added tax, the other price is for tourists. The tourist price is generally lower." Gaya says the dual pricing policy is adopted by foreign manufacturers in order to develop foreign markets.

Moheb Ali is not convinced. Says he: "In the case of the Mercedes Benz, the makers have a printed list which indicates one price for Germans and another for tourists, but in the case of the Audi, there is no such official communication."

Undervaluing of price and declaring a lower engine capacity aren't the only crimes involved in the Audi imports. The DRI believes that several of the Audis were imported not by genuine buyers but by various *havala* racketeers (a *havala* dealer is one who provides foreign exchange abroad in return for rupee payment in India, at a premium).

It's not difficult to understand why it's a profitable business. To import a car, it is necessary to have a CCP for which it is essential to have stayed abroad. Not everyone who wants a foreign car fulfils that condition. That's where the *havala* racketeer comes in; he imports a car and sells it at a premium.

To obtain a CCP, the *havala* dealers first locate Indians abroad who are willing to lend their name and bank account. To do this, they even place advertisements in foreign publications, offering as much as Rs 1 lakh.

"When they get the bank account number, the *havala* dealer deposits cash as payment for the cars," says deputy director, Enforcement Directorate, C.M. Mehra. One of the arrested car racketeers had issued zeroxes of letters to people in the US asking them to lend their names and bank accounts. Workers in the Gulf are another target. "They can earn up to a lakh of rupees without any sweat," Mehra explains. The racket has even spawned a secondary market in CCPs, at prices as high as Rs 1.40 lakh each.

Now, the DRI is closing in. And for the racketeers, the drive up easy street seems to be over. —RAGHU NANDAN DHAR

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From Industrial Fans and Tea Processing Machinery to sophisticated Air Pollution Control Equipment and Systems

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All this and more makes Yule a multidimensional 125 year old national enterprise. Geared to meet the changing scenario of the Indian Industry.

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A Range so Wide, The Quality so Precise ... It Could Only Come From a Leader.

Enter the beautiful world of MAC blinds. MAC, the largest selling range of vertical and horizontal blinds.

Designed exquisitely to blend with the most plush decor to simple avant garde style. MAC blinds are manufactured with utmost care and precision, with the best of raw- material the world has to after, using sophisticated machinery at our state-of-the-art plants.

For the First time in India ... MAC 'Ultra' Slimline and Micro blinds

Exciting and innovative. That's the MAC Ultra. The singular sensation. And what makes it so sensational, is the All-in-One control cord. Which means we have put the ease and convinience of operation in one single cord. Now you can raise, lower or tilt the blinds with just one cord, through the advanced technology of our unique clutch system.

Raises Lowers Tilts

One cord does it all.

The MAC Ultra blinds are available in both slimline and micro styles that gives a sleek and contemporary look. The specially weighted control always hangs straight and neat.

MAC blinds are completely colour-coordinated. Available in a spectrum of over 200 shades to choose from hand-painted Jacquards, rich timber patterns and designer blinds, with stripes, dots and perforation, in 15 mm. 25 mm. and 50 mm.

A classic way to interior decor ... MAC Vertical blinds

Add that touch of glamour and sophistication with MAC Vertical blinds. Manufactured with imported cotton polyester fabrics, that gives your rooms and offices a sleek contemporary look which can match with the best in the world. Available in 100 mm. width with a wide choice of soothing pastel shades to bright yellows, orange, red and blues. Besides hand painted floral and graphic patterns, to go with any kind of decor you have in mind.

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Come drape your windows like never before, and you'll enjoy the magic of MAC blinds and drapery rods for years to come. That's a promise only a leader can make.

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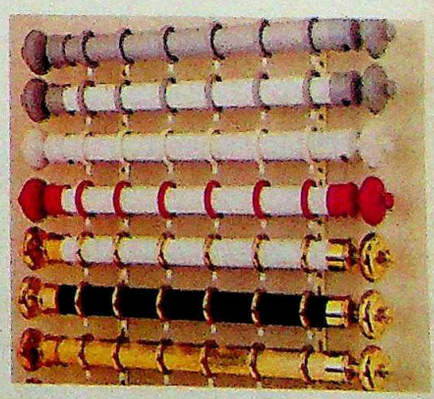

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A complement to your taste and style. MAC 'Goldline' Drapery rods.

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wide range of shirts, trousers, ties,
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A cut above the rest.

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Hello ! This is Garibdasji

THE GARIBDASJI GROUP

The group has come a longway since its inception, charting remarkable growth in a short span of time. Having business dealing with over 750 customers spread within and outside the country, and a multicrore turn over (expected to double by next year), the group is at the threshold of a promising future.

THE GROUPS' ACTIVITIES:

Not only has the group carved a niche as a professional trading house but is also involved in the clearing & shipping and export business.

The Multifarious activities include a wide spectrum of products from Hosiery knitting needles to Knitted garments and yarn, to Industrial grade salts, edible salt etc.

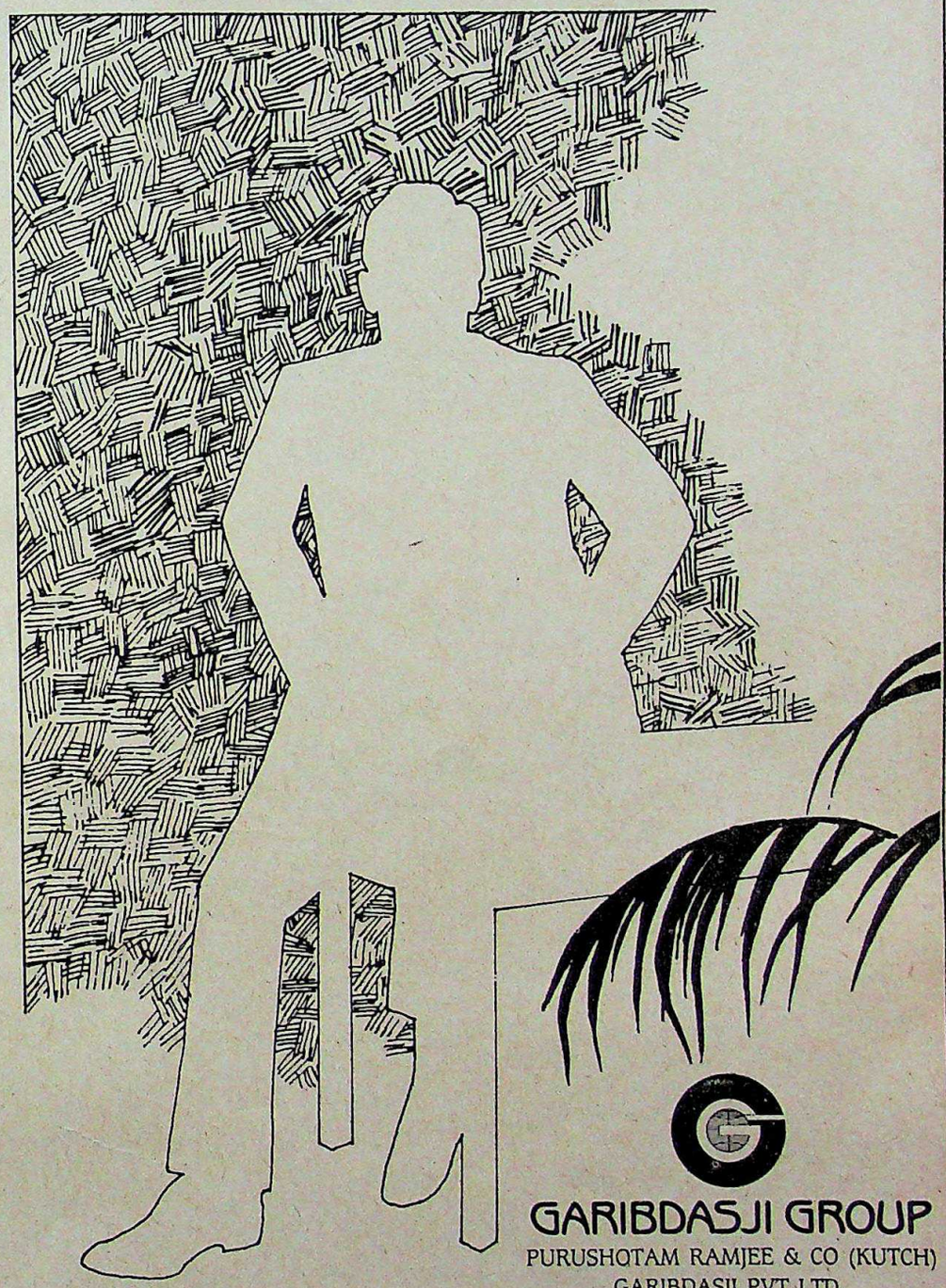
The Kandla Branch is involved in the clearing & shipping activities.

The Gandhidham and Bhavnagar Branch is actively involved in the procurement and despatch of various grades of Industrial salts to chemical Industries besides dealing in edible salt.

The Coimbatore office is dealing in viscose staple fibre Polynosic fibre, High performance fibres, Polyester fibres, Acrylic fibres, Dyed and Grey Polyester texturised yarns and flat yarn, Dyed and grey crimped Nylon yarn, Nylon tyre cord yarn for textile applications and fishing applications, grey cloth of 100% staple fibre as well as cotton, synthetic blended spun yarn.

Dealing in GBS Hosiery knitting needles, exports of Knitted garments and knitted cloth,etc,are some of the specialised activities of our Tirupur Branch.

Today the Garibdasji Group, with wide ramifications is poised to take on new challenges, spurred by the confidence born out of a successful past, and by an indomitable spirit for service.



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BRANCHES

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SHREE KRISHNA SOCIETY
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SARDAR NAGAR
BHAVNAGAR 364 001

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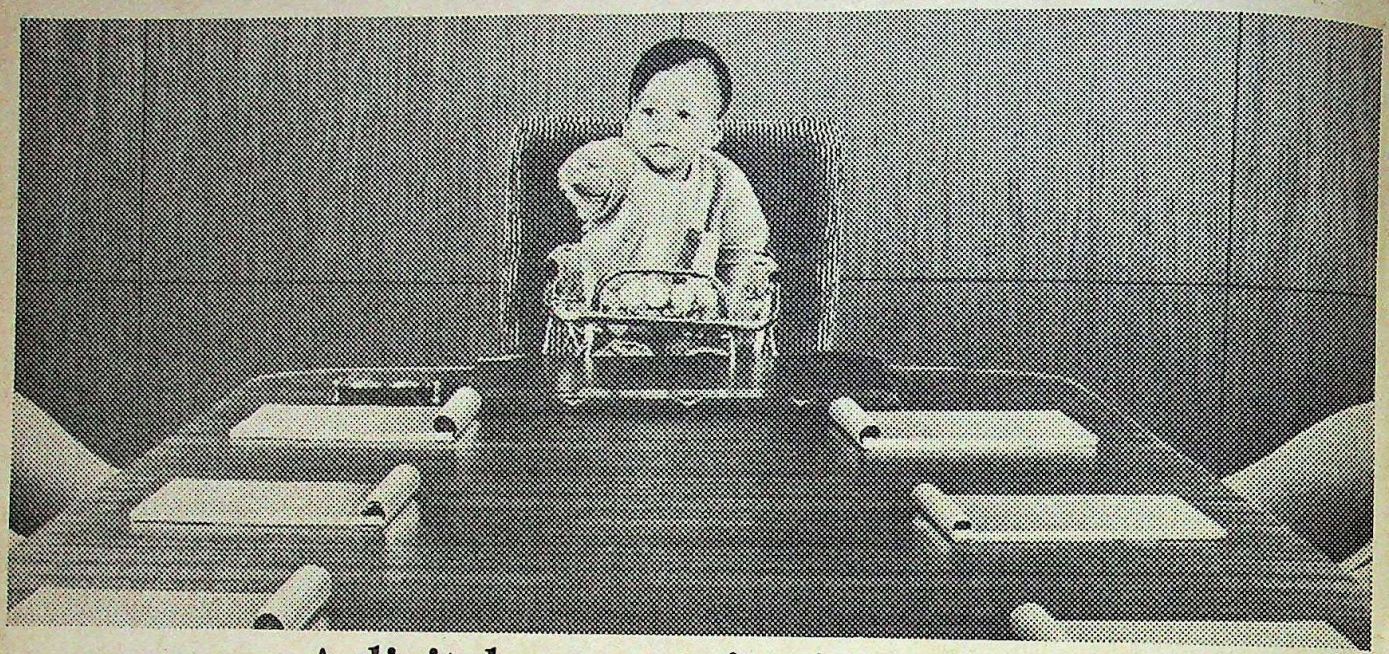

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UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

SMALL pharmaceutical manufacturers are hitting out at industry bigwigs including multinationals and large Indian concerns. The move is in response to statements by the finance and industry ministers on the need to prevent big business from encroaching on the territory reserved for the small-scale sector.

In a representation to the Government, the All India Small Drug Manufacturers Association has claimed that certain large pharmaceutical companies have adopted dubious means to avail of concessions which are actually meant for small firms. Large companies 'sell' their brand names and manufacturing rights to small private firms and trusts for exorbitant royalties. However, the firms and trusts are directly or indirectly associated with the promoters of the large companies. This, the association feels, not only violates the laws of the land but gives an unfair advantage to large companies. The Government's response is awaited.

CREDIT CARD BINGE

WHILE a number of nationalised banks are finding it tough to promote their credit cards because of poor recoveries, other banks are trying hard to grab a share of the plastic. For example, the Citibank-Diners credit card alliance is expecting Reserve Bank approval by end-March. And Visa has already tied up with ANZ Grindlays. Also hoping for a piece of the action is publishing giant Bennett, Coleman and Company's financial services clone, Times Guaranty. It plans to join hands with a foreign bank or a hotel chain to market credit cards. That's not all. The Tatas' Taj group of hotels, which has floated its own credit card, is exploring the possibility of tying up with the US-based Mastercard.

FOREIGN COLLABORATIONS

THE Ahmedabad-based Lalbhai group is going in for a spate of foreign collaborations. Its Rs 153-crore flagship, Arvind Mills Ltd, recently struck a deal to sell Arrow brand shirts—which are popular in the US—in India and abroad. This comes after the company's tie-up with well-known American garment corporation, Levi Strauss, for manufacturing jeans. Apart from garments, the group has also entered into a new agreement with Japan's electronic giant, Hitachi, to make TV sets. This, despite the fact that the group's Pyramid brand television sets are not faring well in the market. Further, it has obtained a fresh licence to produce videotapes in collaboration with Japanese company, GVC—which in turn will buy back a portion of the output.

UP FOR SALE

AFTER months of dilly-dallying, scooter manufacturer LML Ltd decided to hawk its ailing synthetic fibres subsidiary. Reason: it needs funds to revamp the operations of its main line of business, scooters.

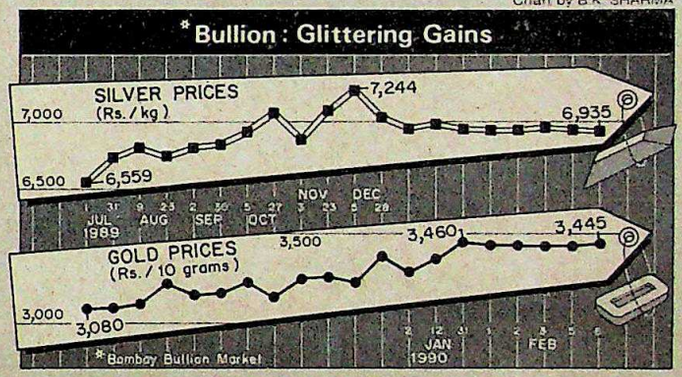
Late last year, the sale of the fibres unit to J.K. Synthetics seemed imminent. However, differences between the two Singhania brothers, Sitaram and Deepak, who control the Kanpur-based company, reportedly stalled the sale. Now, the family dispute has been resolved and negotiations are on with three companies interested in buying the fibres unit.

Meanwhile, LML has expanded the scope of its agreement with Piaggio, Italy's prestigious scooter producer. Piaggio, which supplied technology to LML, has agreed to invest Rs 7 crore in the company increasing its equity stake to 28 per cent—the same as that of the Singhanias.

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES

THE recent goings-on in the Indian bullion market are out of the ordinary. Last fortnight, silver prices in Bombay slid to Rs 6,935 a kg from the December 5 high of Rs 7,244. Gold prices, however, remained very close to the

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Rs 3,460 per 10 grams peak reached in late-January. One reason why silver prices haven't gone up despite higher domestic and industrial demand is that there is an increased inflow of the white metal being smuggled into the country.

DOMESTIC SOLUTION

CITICORP Overseas Software Ltd (COSL)—a Citicorp subsidiary—has a problem on its hands. Located in the Santa Cruz Export Processing Zone in Bombay—a free trade zone—it is losing a lot of domestic business. If it sells computer software to an Indian concern, a duty of around 120 per cent has to be paid. But a way out has been found. COSL is floating a new company, Citicorp Information Technology Industries, to sell its products exclusively to Indian buyers.

FIVE-STAR COMPETITION

THE five-star hotels business continues to boom. At least 18 corporate groups are competing to construct a hotel on a prime 4.5-acre plot in the capital. Those that have pre-qualified include the Tatas (Taj chain), the Oberois, Asian (Hyatt), ITC (Welcomgroup) and Regent. Also in the fray are the Ansals, the Hong Kong-based Harileilas, Shaw Wallace and Unitech Builders which has tied up with the Edwardian group of UK. At the same time, Welcomgroup and Srinivasa Resorts have also decided to jointly set up a Rs 25-crore hotel in Hyderabad.

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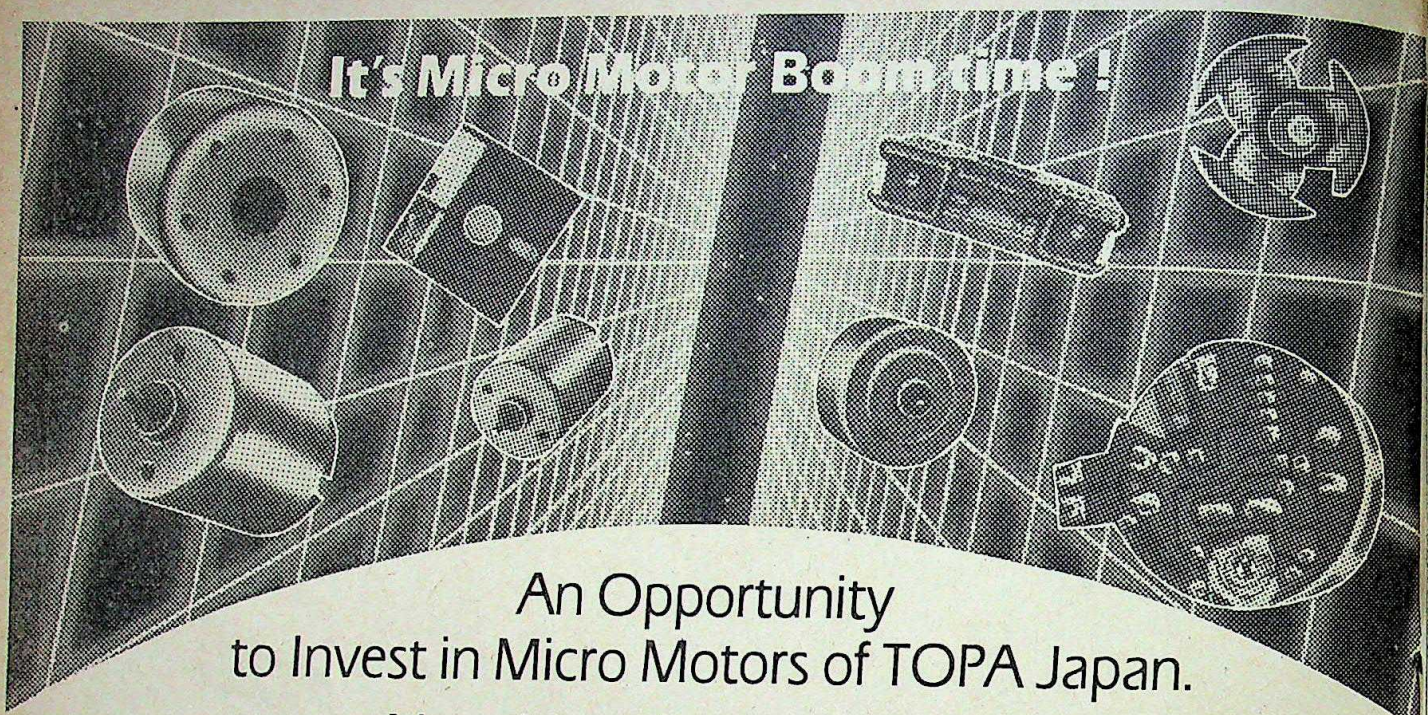

An Opportunity to Invest in Micro Motors of TOPA Japan.

Now Manufactured in India by Micro Accessories India Ltd.

Come, be a part of the most dramatic breakthrough in precision technology.
Components that will radically change the level of sophisticated product manufacture in the country.

Project Highlights

- Capacity : 3.6 million Micro Motors
- Production facilities :
  - Most Modern In-house Press shop equipped with High Speed, High Precision, Automatic Presses from AIDA - BRUDERER and AIDA of Japan.
  - Complete Tooling from AIDA
  - Air conditioned assembly shop
  - Automated conveyorised assembly lines
  - On-line testing
  - Participative R & D arrangements with TOPA Japan

Collaboration : Technical collaboration with Tokyo Parts Industrial Co. (TOPA), a Company jointly sponsored by SANYO CORPORATION & SMC Group, Japan.

- R & D : Reciprocal arrangement with TOPA, JAPAN.
- Location : Banganagar : 30 kms. from Calcutta in Pollution - free belt;
- Product Mix : A Range of DC Micro Motors.
- Product Application :
  - Cassette Tape Decks, Stereo Cassette Decks, Dual Cassette Decks, Walkman, Stereo Headphones, Video Tape Recorder loading, Electronic Toys, Computer Disc Drives. Control mechanisms of Automobile and Industrial machinery - to name a few.
- Market Potential : Current domestic market demand 4.5 million DC Micro Motors. Growth rate 30% p.a. Vast Overseas Market.
- Sales & Service : Network ready and operational ;

Issue Highlights

- Technical Collaboration with Tokyo Parts Industrial Co. (TOPA)
- Equity Participation by TOPA, SBI Mutual Fund, Canbank Mutual Fund, WBIDC.
- Product in great demand rapidly expanding market.
- Biggest single Micro Motor manufacturer in India.
- No gestation period. Commercial production to commence soon.
- Import substitution with export potential.
- Buy Back by TOPA upto 50% of production.
- 80M, 80CC, 80L & Wealth Tax Benefits.
- Easy liquidity. Listed at Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi Stock Exchanges.

Equity participation and Buy-back arrangement with TOPA, Japan.

Issue of 17,60,000 Equity Shares of Rs. 10/- each for cash at par aggregating Rs. 1.76 crores.

Issue Opens : February 19, 1990

Sobhaya/MM/CC/160

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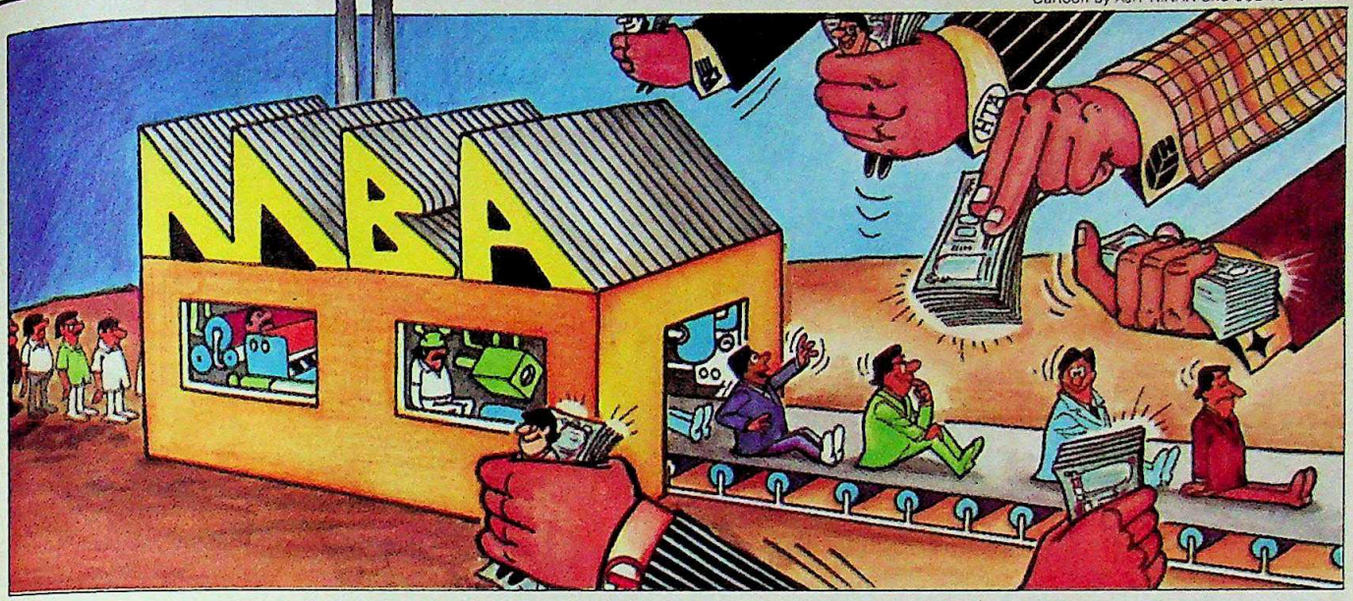

MBAs

Sitting Pretty

Pampered with plush perks, the professionally trained executives now control the levers of power in all kind of companies.

THE brash brigade has become brasher still. Even a decade ago, the young executive sporting an MBA (Master of Business Administration) label was a bit of a curiosity in the country's corporate circles. Many managements were wary of their smart-aleck ways. But not any longer. The MBA is today pampered with plush perquisites. And the breed has come to control the levers of power in companies, large and small, Indian and multinational, private and public.

Even as MBA courses continue to attract the brightest young persons, another development is taking place: a section of the glam-gang is rejecting the trappings of power to join the Government or work in social welfare organisations or even set up their own enterprises. But that has not diluted their ambition to excel.

From a tentative start in the early '60s, management education has achieved a degree of popularity in India unmatched by any other area of professional education. Consider these facts:

► From a few hundred MBAs a year, two decades ago, the four Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), 77 university departments and various other institutes today turn out more than 6,000 MBAs every year.

► In December, over 30,000 persons aspired to enter the IIMs, nearly double the number of candidates five years ago and almost six times the number of aspirants in the '70s.

► Of the 30,000 youngsters who crave for an MBA tag from an IIM, barely 2 per cent will fulfil their dreams.

► Almost all MBAs from reputed management institutes can today expect to receive a trainee's salary in excess of Rs 3,500 a month when they join a company, almost Rs 1,000 more than what they would have got three years earlier.

► Late last year in the IIM campuses at Ahmedabad and Calcutta, there were unseemly squabbles among recruiting companies each wanting to become the 'first' to offer posts to students; some companies wanted the students who had been offered jobs to make up their minds in 15 minutes!

Barely 25 years ago, the first batch of 47 MBAs had walked out of the then fledgling IIM at Ahmedabad, set up by the Indian Government in collaboration with the Harvard Business School of

Table by MAHENDRA RATHORE

HEAD START
(Starting salaries offered to MBA trainees)

	Rs per month
Blue Star	3,500
Crompton Greaves	3,500
Godrej & Boyce	3,700
Hindustan Lever	3,745 plus 600 HRA
Hindustan Thomson	3,510
Indian Aluminium	2,975 plus perks
NOCIL	4,000
Otis	3,500
Ranbaxy	4,000 plus benefits
Shipping Corporation	2,900
Tata Administrative Service	3,500 plus 1,000 HRA
Ashok Leyland	3,500
Indian Hotels	4,000
Hindustan Ciba Geigy	3,500
Berger Paints	3,800
Colgate Palmolive	3,000
VST Industries	3,500
Wipro	3,300

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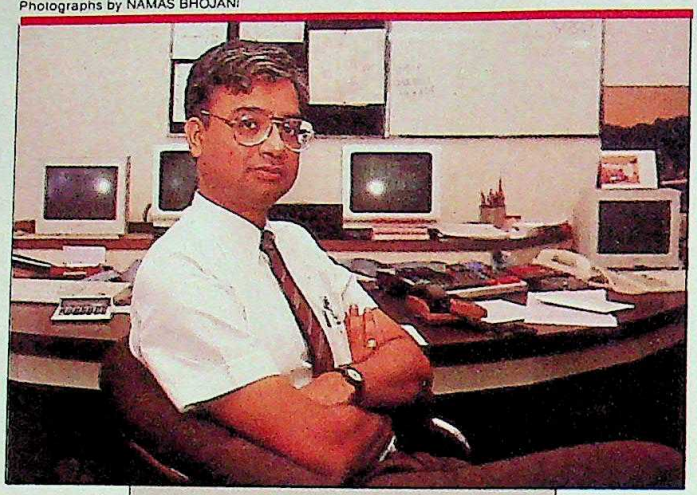
the US. One of the individuals in that first batch was Arun Nanda, 46, who heads the high-profile advertising agency, Rediffusion. "The problem for MBAs those days lay not so much in finding good jobs but in gaining acceptance within an organisation," reminisces Nanda.

Vinayak Chatterjee, 30, who took a MBA degree from the same institute 15 years after Nanda to set up a market research. firm with fellow graduates, echoes this view: "Till the '60s, our professors had to indulge in considerable hard sell to convince companies to recruit MBAs; but by the mid-'70s, there was a sea change in the situation."

Gone were the days when the colour of the school tie mattered more than one's educational qualifications. The MBA upstart had arrived on the scene causing ripples of suspicion in the staid world of the *burra sahibs*. Still, few imagined then that within a generation, the tribe of MBAs would occupy senior positions in industry in double-quick time. That the MBA degree would become a magic password to corporate success.

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI



ROHIT BHARGAVA
Manager, Foreign Exchange, Hongkong Bank

"The skills I acquired at Bajaj taught me to be a practical manager."

For an MBA who has put in a decade in industry, the gross annual remuneration is unlikely to be less than Rs 1.5 lakh, excluding subsidised transport and housing. Much of the aura surrounding MBAs today is a consequence of the successful track records of the first generation of Indian MBAs. Persons like Nanda and his Rediffusion partner from IIM, Calcutta, Ajit Balakrishnan, who also heads the Bangalore-based computer concern, PSI Data Systems. These MBAs personify the get-rich-quick attitude, they symbolise the new middle class dream. Says Moheet Nagrath, human resources manager at Procter & Gamble: "It is probably the only professional course in India which requires the least effort in relation to the financial rewards in the future."

Foreign banks, staffed by non-MBAs until a few years ago, are now chock-full of MBAs. Hongkong Bank's foreign exchange manager Rohit Bhargava, 36, is one such whiz-kid. After an engineering degree from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, he picked up an MBA from

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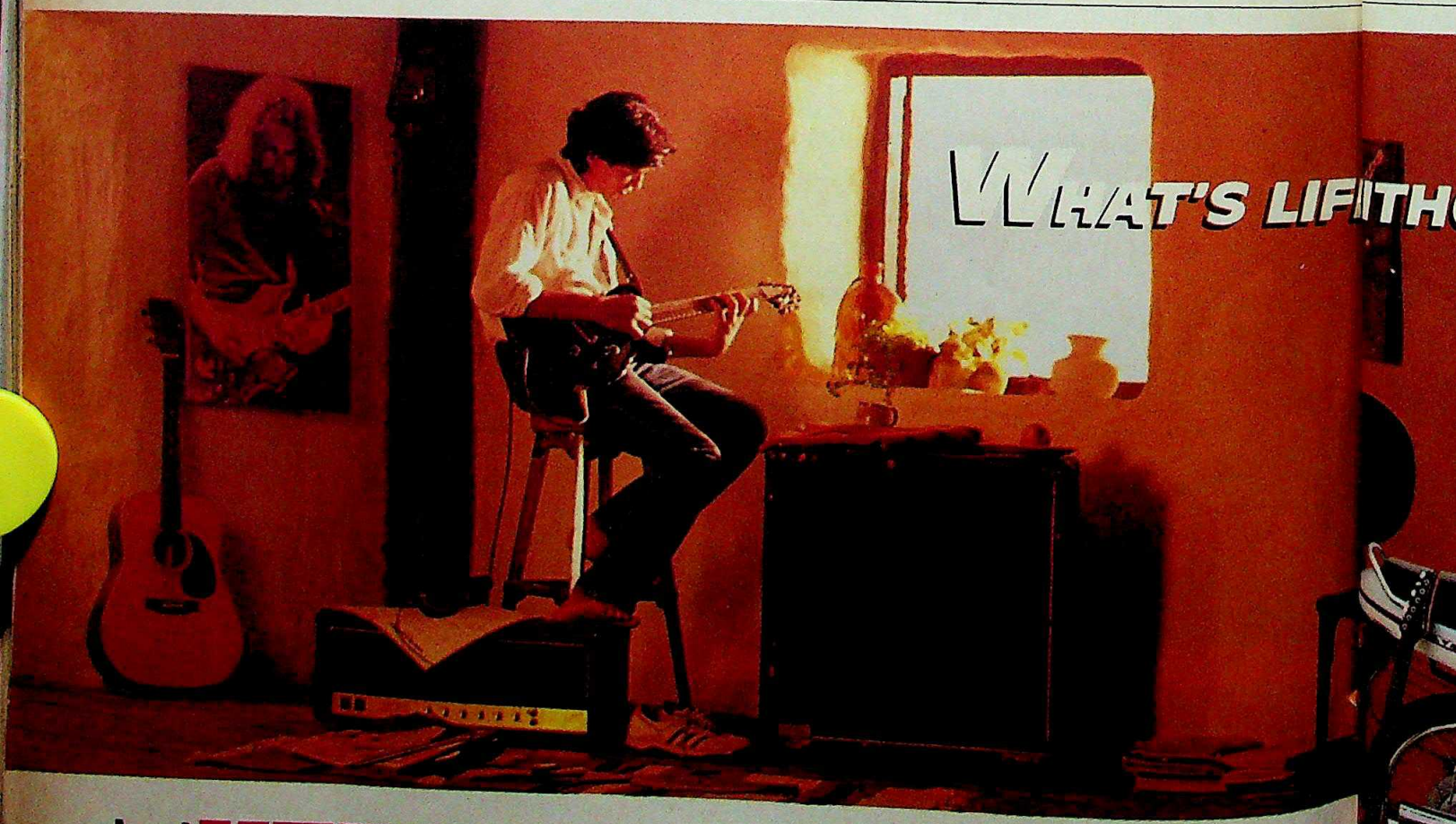

HERO HONDA

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SHAN Raina, 31, an MBA from IIM, Calcutta, and Anita Ramachandran, 34, MBA from Bajaj Institute, e other such success stos. As Executive Director of ntract Advertising, Raina probably one of the youngst persons to be in such a sition. "The MBA course ught me how to think big," ys he. Ramachandran is seor manager in the management consultancy division of A.F. Ferguson & Co. Not only is she highly regarded as management analyst, but is the only nior woman manager in the company.

Most of the first generation of Indian BAs attribute their success, at least in rt, to their professional training. Asrts Nanda: "Unequivocally, it was the st part of one's educational experice." One of the most crucial skills that ey possess is the holistic perspective ey acquire which enables them to cut rough functional areas of business and dustry. Says Sanjay Bhade, partner, Consumer Focus, a market research agency: "The skills we acquire act as an input in our thinking process—they don't necessarily provide solutions." V. Shankar, vice-president, Bank of America, adds: "The MBAs' basic skill lies in their ability to understand quickly the complexities of industry—a multi-dimensional perspective that many others lack."

PANKAJ BALIGA
Vice-president,
Indian Hotels Limited

"Don't blame the MBAs; the company has to find the right job for the right person."

Even MBA greenhorns are convinced that the two-year course they go through is a great asset. Shalini Mungla, a management trainee at Lintas India, avers: "Senior executives discussed real corporate case studies with us and that helped." Other MBAs, however, contend that particular courses—such as the quantitative ones—are sometimes not found relevant later on. The consensus seems to be that MBA courses help develop a person's communication skills and sharpen leadership qualities.

Industry spokesmen agree that MBAs have brought with them genuine professionalism in corporate operations. Adjectives used commonly to describe these young managerial turks include: cre-

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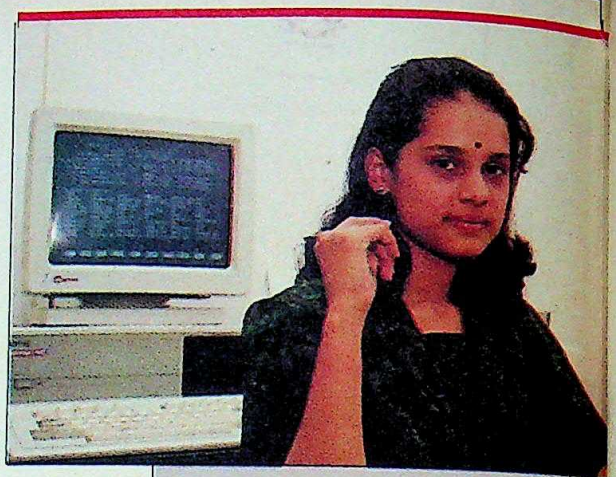
ative, articulate, systems-oriented, ambitious, confident and aggressive. Says Rahul Bajaj, chairman and managing-director of Bajaj Auto, which has to date, hired 40 MBAs: "We find them particularly good for areas like marketing and management systems."

Still, it isn't as if everybody is equally enamoured of MBAs. In fact, some are quite critical of them. For example, Pradip Shah, managing director, Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited, who is a graduate of the Harvard Business School, remarks: "Many MBAs are in too much of a hurry to achieve what they want and that is bad." Even today, some firms like Mahindra Ugine Steel don't hire MBAs almost as a matter of policy. Vice-Chairman Anand Mahindra says: "Their expectations are too high—what's the point if you can't meet them?" MBAs are also criticised for their love for lucre. And some seem convinced that MBAs are more oriented towards analysis than action, that they prefer writing reports to implementing programmes and are inveterate job-hoppers.

But such criticism is dismissed by persons like Pankaj Baliga, vice-president, Indian Hotels Limited: "Don't blame the MBAs the organisation has to find the right job for the right person." Interestingly, some industrialists are themselves feeling the need to enrol for management courses to keep up with the times. As tycoon Manu Chhabria—who has attended a course in Harvard—remarked: "I have about 100 MBAs working for me. I have to understand what they are talking about."

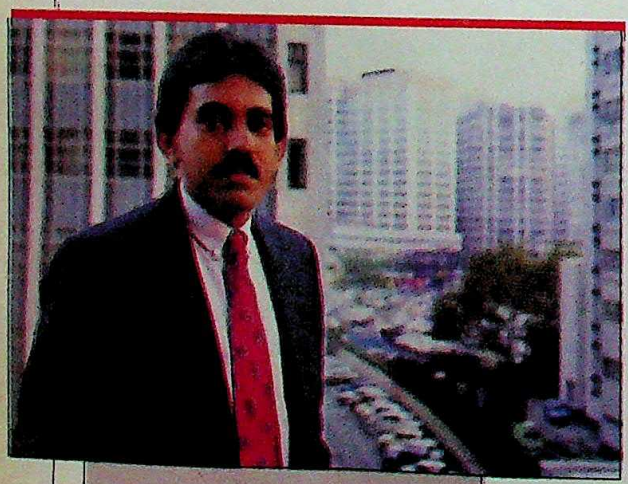


SHILPA SHIRGAONKAR
Management Trainee
ICICI

"I did not join a foreign bank since money was not the sole motivating factor."

THOSE who recruit MBAs contend that freshers have to be trained in a stimulating work environment if they are to be retained in the organisation and their potential fully realised. It is perhaps this need to be "stimulated"—albeit in a different manner—that has made a small section of MBAs move out of the beaten track. For this minority, the real challenges lie not in the hurly-burly of the corporate world but in government bodies and in voluntary agencies. Says N.R. Sheth, director, IIM, Ahmedabad: "Two years ago, I was surprised but happy to note that 25 MBAs opted out of the campus placement process and decided to appear for the civil service exams—something an MBA would not dream of doing five years ago."

But times have changed. Shilpa Shirgaonkar took an MBA degree from IIM, Calcutta, last year and joined the public financial institution, Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India, as a management trainee. She is one of a select but increasing band of MBAs who have given up plum jobs with multinationals to work in the public sector. Says Shirgaonkar: "I did not join a foreign bank because money was not the sole motivating factor for me. I felt I would be buying a life-style I was not used to."



V. SHANKAR
Vice-president,
Bank of America

"The skill of MBAs lies in quickly grasping the industry's complexities."

Similarly, Sunil Mehta left a cushy post in an international bank and teamed up with his fellow IIM MBAs to set up Information for Action—an organisation that does research and analysis for large companies. "At one stage in the bank I found I was signing 200 cheques a day. The environment was mundane and stifling," recalls Mehta.

Another such person is Vijay Mahajan, programme director of Pradan, a voluntary social welfare organisation engaged in rural development. An electronics engineer with an MBA degree from IIM, Ahmedabad, Mahajan spent four years in the corporate sector before chucking it up. Says he: "While the number of MBAs getting into rural development is minuscule, the unfortunate thing is that there are not enough institutions in the country that can absorb even these few individuals."

But people like Shirgaonkar, Mehta and Mahajan are exceptions. For the overwhelming majority of MBAs, the 'hot' jobs are still in multinationals and foreign banks. And the preferred discipline remains marketing, followed by management information systems, finance and personnel. According to a study of career aspirations of MBAs conducted by A.F. Ferguson, the front-ranking organisations in 1990 are Citibank in financial services, Hindustan Lever Limited in consumer durables and Lintas in advertising. Market research is also popular. Here, the popular companies are Indian Market Research Bureau and Marketing and Research Group.

After a quarter century, India's MBAs have proved that professional management has truly arrived in the country. And that's recorded not only in salary structures and lavish life-styles, but more importantly in performance and in their search for excellence.

—SHIV TANEJA with PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

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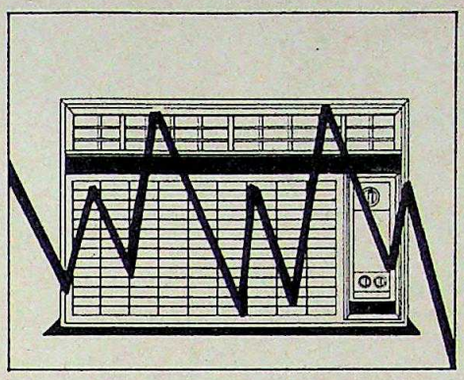


Voltage fluctuations can destroy a new airconditioner in just one summer

Is there a way out?

Sharp drops and highs in voltage can harm an ordinary compressor, which can't keep up with the fluctuations.

Several months of such fluctuations are known to actually 'kill' a compressor—even a new one. And as you know, the compressor is the heart of an airconditioner.

However, voltage fluctuations are a part of our lives. So what do you do?

Using a voltage stabilizer helps — *but it is not enough.* You need your airconditioner to be fitted with a compressor that gives you protection where a stabilizer leaves off.

The Kirloskar compressor handles fluctuations—and extreme heat

This compressor has an exceptionally wide operating range of 180 volts to 260 volts. Other compressors operate within a narrower range—and even then, "at the rated temperature". If you look at the small print, you will notice that this is a mere 35°C.

As against the scorching *46°C*, at which the Kirloskar compressor still operates smoothly and within its stated wide voltage range!

The Kirloskar compressor also has a built-in *overload protector* which shuts off the compressor automatically during periods of severe voltage fluctuations.

A third protective feature special to the Kirloskar compressor is an *internal pressure relief valve.* If there is any undue increase in pressure on the compressor, this valve automatically goes into action—and the pressure is taken off your AC.

Only an airconditioner fitted with a Kirloskar compressor offers you this terrific trio of safety features.

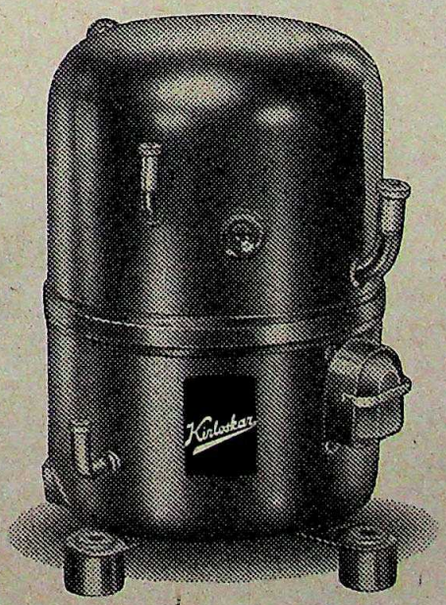
For Indian operating conditions

This is because this compressor has been built with the country's unique conditions in mind—not just the erratic power supply, but the heat and dust as well. Besides it's energy-efficient.

And the Kirloskar compressor is *quiet.* None of that rude, annoying drone that other compressors can't seem to avoid.

Little wonder that 6 out of 10 ACs are fitted with Kirloskar compressors.

And that, despite years of ups and downs in power supply, they are doing just fine.



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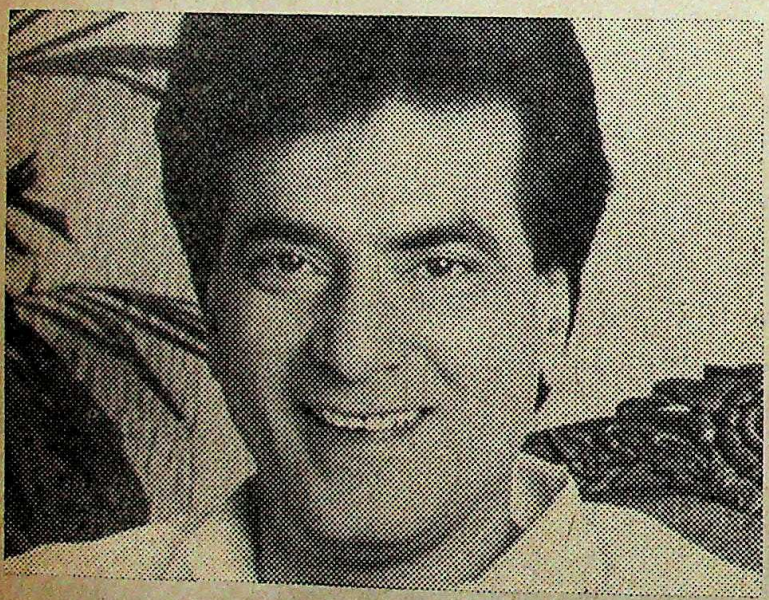


Look forward to the best years of your life. Mature, confident, fruitful years.

So what if you're not as young as you were ?

If you're overworked, run down, tense, unable to achieve that little bit more ... recharge your energies with Thirty Plus.

Thirty Plus contains Ginseng...

Ginseng has been revered by oriental scientists for centuries, and is in great demand today for its health giving and energizing properties.

Ginseng is a safe, natural stimulant, often used by athletes to increase stamina and performance.

Many world celebrities have used ginseng, including Indira Gandhi, Henry Kissinger and Marlon Brando.

... and Ashwagandha

Ashwagandha is a native root, mentioned in Vedic literature as a herbal tonic and health food.

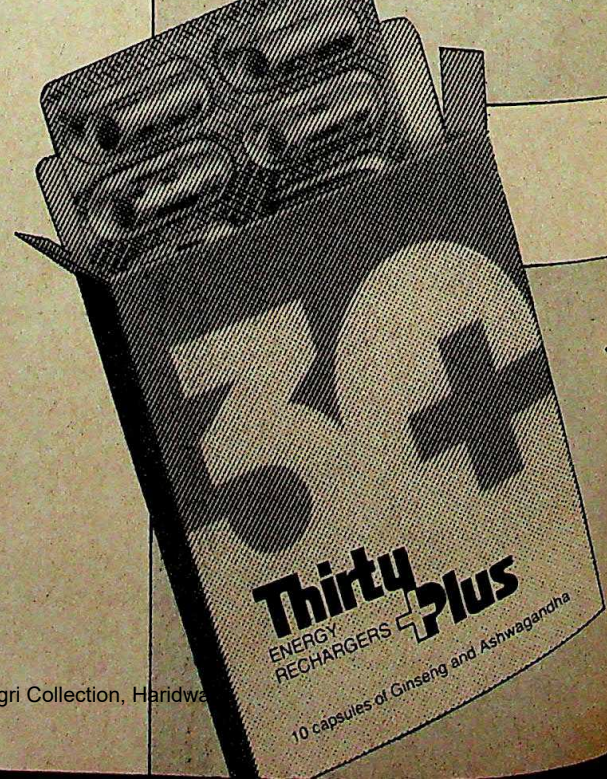
Ashwagandha improves muscular strength and infuses fresh energy and vigour in the human system when worn out due to stress, fatigue, or chronic illness.

A potent combination

Both Korean Ginseng and Ashwagandha are valued for aphrodisiacal properties, and studies indicate that these beliefs are justified.

Combining Ginseng and Ashwagandha in a single capsule, Thirty Plus offers you a potent energizer, which helps build resistance, combat stress and boost vitality.

So you feel fit, healthy and strong. Able to enjoy the best years of your life.



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TATAS

Heady Heights

With the Haldia project in the bag and two other mega projects on the anvil, the Rs 8,400-crore group tops the big league.

THE players were sharp and mean, the stakes high. The game involved political intrigue, boardroom manoeuvring and media hype. The prize: the Rs 3,000-crore Haldia petrochemicals project in West Bengal, a grassroot, naphtha-based plant with a capacity to produce 300,000 tonnes of ethylene a year.

Late in January, after endless rounds, a winner finally emerged: 72-year-old Darbari Seth, chairman of Tata Tea Ltd and third in the triumvirate of power-brokers—after J.R.D. Tata and Ratan Tata—controlling the industrial house of the Tatas, which clocked a combined turnover exceeding Rs 8,400 crore last year.

Originally, the main co-promoter for the mother naphtha cracker was to be Rama Prasad Goenka of RPG Enterprises. The country's top business houses were in the race to grab various downstream units using the products of the mother plant. But Seth argued the project ought to be an integrated one—as is the trend world-wide. The argument seemed to convince the Left Front Government. Finally, Seth managed the unthinkable, pipping Goenka to become the main co-promoter of the Haldia project. Says T.C. Dutt, state chief secretary: "The Tatas are a group considered best by all."

Adds Subrata Ganguly, vice-chairman and managing director of Associated Cement Companies, a Tata group associate, and former chairman of Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd: "The integrated concept and the financial stability it brings, coupled with the strengths of the Tatas, made the decision (to award the project) easy for the (state) Government." Ganguly should

® THE TATA EMPIRE

*NET PROFITS (Rs. Crore)			SALES (Rs. Crore)	
1987-88	1988-89		1987-88	1988-89
92.15	154.34	TATA STEEL	1,526.8	1,816.8
26.95	70.03	TELCO	1,402.5	1,676.4
6.85	3.81	ACC	798.1	830.3
33.77	44.94	TATA ELECTRIC COMPANIES	686.4	758.8
9.70	14.79	VOLTAS	546.7	607.2
6.23	8.76	RALLIS INDIA	290.5	326.3
1.57	2.15	TATA OIL MILLS	287.7	288.6
27.20	35.79	TATA CHEMICALS	230.4	291.7
11.04	13.64	TATA TEA	142.8	175.1
6.76	9.37	THE INDIAN HOTELS	105.7	117.7
1.12	1.45	LAKME	46.5	56.0
1.55	1.93	TATA UNISYS	27.1	36.3
0.26	1.41	TITAN WATCHES	18.9	37.4
0.70	0.83	TATA PRESS	12.9	15.7

® Major Enterprises only. Figures have been annualised.
* Profits after tax and depreciation but not appropriations.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

DARBARI SETH
Chairman, Tata Tea Ltd

"We must be totally self-reliant. In a project of this size, we mustn't depend on the discretionary powers of a handful of individuals."

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI

J.R.D. TATA
Chairman, Tata Sons

"Darbari Seth is undoubtedly the leading entrepreneur of the Tata group. I am confident he will be able to implement the project successfully."

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know; he played a pivotal role advising the state Government on the project.

What finally swung the pendulum was Seth's strategy to make the project earn foreign exchange. Within the petrochemicals complex, there will be a separate unit exporting propylene. Says Seth: "We must be fully self-reliant—we don't want to participate in a project of this size if we are dependent on the discretionary powers of some individuals."

With Haldia in the bag, Seth now has three mega projects to oversee, the other two being the Rs 2,000-crore joint sector petroleum refinery at Karnal, Haryana and the Rs 765-crore fertiliser plant at Babrala, Uttar Pradesh. The three projects collectively involve an investment of nearly Rs 6,000 crore spread over the next five years or so. Can Seth successfully swing them all, or is it one plant too many?

"I think we can do it," he says confidently. The promoters' contributions for the Karnal and Babrala projects, he explains, have already been set aside as investments in the account books of Tata Chemicals. "We will have to raise about Rs 187 crore (extra) which is our share of the equity capital for Haldia," he adds. Which should not pose a problem given the fact that he has two cash cows in his corporate flock—Tata Tea and Tata Chemicals. Besides, associate companies can pitch in if funds fall short.

Most important, Seth will have the solid backing of the Tata group. Says group patriarch J.R.D. Tata: "Seth is today the leading entrepreneur of the Tatas. I am confident he can do it." That faith is solidly grounded.

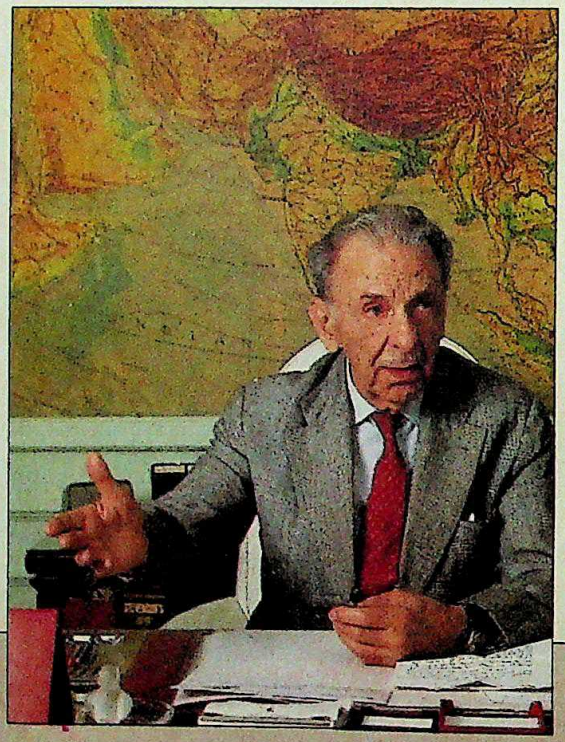
MORE than four decades ago, as a brash young chemical engineer, Seth had told the Tata Chemicals board of directors that foreign technology was not needed for the company's plant at Mithapur, Gujarat. A few were sceptical of his claims then. No longer. Tata Chemicals has been the world's largest producer of salt, Asia's biggest manufacturer of inorganic chemicals, India's soda ash giant—and, of course, one of the most profitable.

For the denizens of Bombay House—headquarters of the Tata group—the West Bengal business environment is hardly as daunting as it seems to other industrialists. Notwithstanding the communist Government, a reputation for labour militancy and inadequate infrastructural facilities, Tata companies in the state have performed creditably and are planning to expand. The Rs 288-crore Tata Oil Mills is moving its Kalyani unit little away from the city, at a cost of Rs 8 crore.

Late last year, the group's Indian Hotels Company commissioned Taj Bengal—a 250-room five-star deluxe hotel built at a capital cost of Rs 45 crore in Alipore near Calcutta zoo. The hotel will be fully operational by April. There were hitches, of course. Though conceived over a decade ago, its construction got bogged down by protests that the hotel would disturb the migratory habits of rare birds visiting Calcutta zoo.

The most visible example of its faith in eastern India's industrial future is Tata Steel. The group's giant Rs 1,861-crore flagship—which markets its products out of Calcutta and has production facilities in Jamshedpur—plans to spend Rs 3,000 crore in the next five years on expansion and modernisation programmes.

Having raised Rs 650 crore from



J.R.D. TATA

"We've remained together"

AT 86, Jehangir Ratanji Dadbhoy 'JRD' Tata, chairman of Tata Sons, is still very alert about the issues facing not only the corporate conglomerate he heads but the country as well. In a 45-minute interview with Senior Correspondent SHIV TANEJA, *the patriarch of India's premier business house spoke candidly on a range of subjects. Excerpts:*

On the Haldia project:

We are happy to be in West Bengal. We wanted a hotel there for some time which has now come up. We've made a fairly big investment there. It shows our belief in the revival of Calcutta. We have Tata Tea, Tata Steel and now, Haldia.

On whether the Haldia project may get delayed like the Karnal project:

No. But it is really for the Government to answer why they are putting the Karnal refinery project on the backburner. However, as the chief minister and the Government are keen that Haldia should go ahead, I presume the same thing will not happen. The two issues are different. In the case of Karnal, an enormous amount of crude oil has to be imported at a terrific cost. But for Haldia, Darbari Seth has structured the scheme in such a way that it will export enough material to pay for imports. Our commitment to Karnal is complete.

On whether the Tata empire will disintegrate:

First, there is no empire. Yes, certainly we are a very large group and a group which, unlike other large groups in this country, has not begun to disintegrate in the second or third generation but has remained together and happily so.

On whether the Tata group has remained together on account of him:

Funnily enough, I feel the contrary. What makes Indian family groups start industries? It is the very fact that family members, including children, nephews and the companies in a group, can be separated and broken up. This cannot happen here. The original parent of this group was Tata Sons. It is still Tata Sons. Who is going to pull it apart? All the heads of the Tata companies say it is not only a question of pride in the group's high reputation but they find there is a synergy, an advantage, in staying together.

On the role of Tata Sons:

Tata Sons played a very active role in setting up the other companies in the days when one did not need too much

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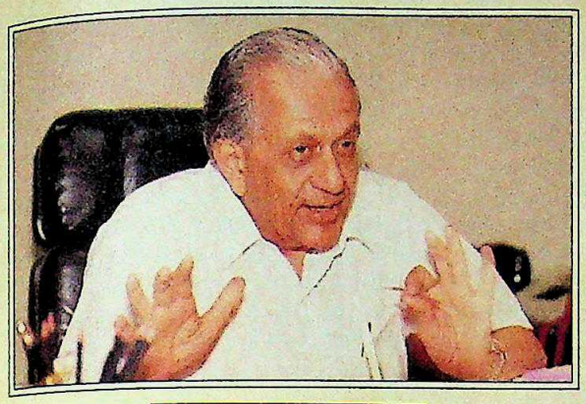
THE HIGH FLYERS

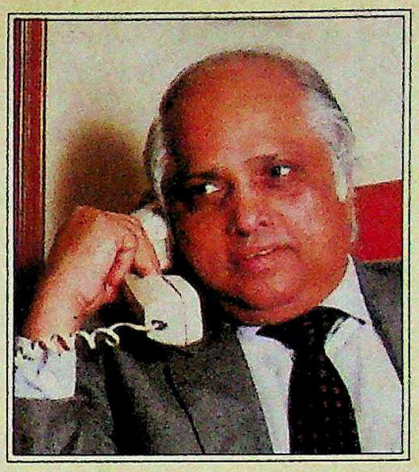


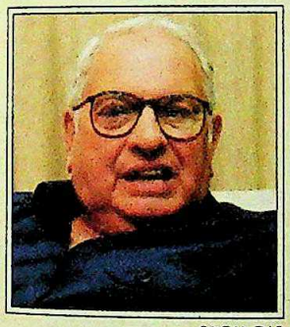
HOMI SETHNA
Chairman, Tata Oil Mills

"Over the next few years we will be looking at investments in the range of Rs 500 crore."

AJIT KERKAR
Chairman, Indian Hotels

"We are also getting involved in hotel construction and technical services."

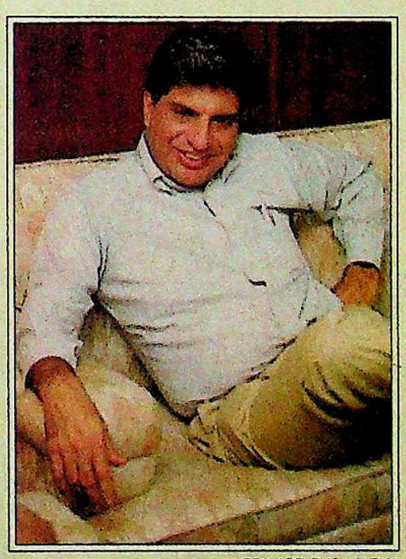




SAIBAL DAS

RUSSI MODY
Chairman, Tata Steel

"We have been steadily pursuing a policy of diversification."



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

RATAN TATA
Chairman, TELCO

"Apart from increasing the product range, we are looking at issues related to technology upgradation and process know how."

money. Today, since most of the money of Tata Sons is kept in trust, it cannot be invested in companies where the levels of risk are high. While the company's role is diminishing, it still remains the group's holding company.

On whether the Tatas will emerge as a multinational group:

Apart from a few areas, I don't see it happening. So long as we in India have the socialist outlook, we'll not have such companies. It may happen in the public sector but not in the private sector.

On the new Government in Delhi:

As long as the Government doesn't change the trend of liberalising the economy and freeing the private sector, the future will throw up opportunities. Before they came to power, the new leaders' attitude was not encouraging. Sometimes they get a little airy-fairy. They talk about concentrating on agriculture. Okay, but then what? I expect the policies will be well-meaning but what happens in practice, we've to see.

the capital markets last year (the largest public issue in the country at the time), Tata Steel is all set to spend close to Rs 1,500 crore on increasing its saleable steel capacity to 2.7 million tonnes a year. Around Rs 800 crore will be spent on the company's ongoing modernisation and technology upgradation schemes. Simultaneously, associate companies will spend around Rs 250 crore on a variety of projects, including one to manufacture special steels. Finally, the company is also diversifying into cement.

"We have been steadily following a policy of diversification," says Tata Steel Chairman Russi Mody. Adds Vice-Chairman S.A. Sabavala: "An additional Rs 250 crore will be spent (on the cement project) which, by 1993, should produce 1.4 million tonnes."

Tata Steel has also been making headlines in Calcutta for other reasons. Recently, Rs 4 lakh was spent on publicising artist M.F. Husain's exhibition and plans are afoot to beautify the city. "Art and industry are not that far apart," says Mody.

In western India, the present base of the Tatas, different plans have been drawn up. Following more than a year of labour agitation at the Pune plant of Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO), the Rs 1,676-crore automotive giant has decided to shift gears and step on the accelerator.

TELCO is on the verge of launching two new vehicle models: the Tata Estate, a station-wagon derivative of the Tata-mobile pick-up and the Tata Sport, a jeep-like vehicle. Says J.E. Talaulicar, TELCO's managing director: "Both these vehicles should be hitting the roads during the current year." The company has decided to rationalise its operations. The Pune facility will henceforth concentrate on the 'light' end of the vehicles market. And the company's new plant which is to come up at Lucknow—on which a sum of Rs 10 crore will be spent in the current year—and its existing unit at Jamshedpur will emphasise production of the medium and heavier range of vehicles.

Moreover, in a year and a half, TELCO should commence production of the

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World Concept vehicle with its collaborator, the West German Daimler-Benz. By 1995, close to 40,000 of these vehicles could be produced, most of them for export to hard-currency areas. The company also has plans to export the Tatamobile to the US. Says TELCO Chairman Ratan Tata: "Apart from increasing the product range, we are looking closely at issues related to technology upgradation and process knowhow, enhancement of quality and improving our relationship with Benz."

He believes the company should not get into areas unrelated to its main line of business. Says he: "It makes no sense for us to get into consumer goods like television sets." Tata feels if TELCO is to diversify it should be in high-technology areas like aerospace.

While TELCO and Tata Steel—India's two largest private sector companies—are frontrunners in their respective fields, several group companies have failed to show satisfactory results. Tata Textiles continues to be in a financial mess and National Radio and Electronics (better known as NELCO) is just about keeping its head above water.

Tata Oil Mills (TOMCO) too, till a few years ago, would have fallen into this category of unfortunates. However, under Homi Sethna, things have started looking up. Capacity utilisation in soaps and detergents is up and company's share of the popular soaps market is around 18 per cent. And the current year's profits are expected to be higher than the Rs 3 crore recorded in 1988-89. "In 1992, we should have profits of Rs 10 crore," predicts Sethna.

A number of diversification schemes are on the cards, including the manufacture of titanium dioxide in Kerala, a detergents plant at Lote and a fatty acid unit at Aurangabad, both in Maharashtra. TOMCO is conducting trials of natural pesticides with the intention of producing them and it hopes to launch a project to green desertland in the Kachch area of Gujarat. Says Sethna: "Over the next few years we will be looking at investments in the range of Rs 500 crore."

Newer and relatively smaller group ventures such as Tata Unisys and Titan Watches have done well. But the brightest of the rising stars in the Tata extended family is undoubtedly Ajit Kerkar, 58, who heads Indian Hotels which runs the Taj chain of hotels.

SAYS J.R.D. Tata: "After Darbari Seth, the leading entrepreneur of the Tatas, the next one is definitely Ajit Kerkar. He (Kerkar) has a tremendous mixture of worthwhile ambition and practical competence." Over the last decade, the Indian Hotels turnover has ballooned from Rs 18 crore to Rs 117 crore. The company and its associates earn the largest amounts of foreign exchange for the Tata group: around Rs 150 crore last year.

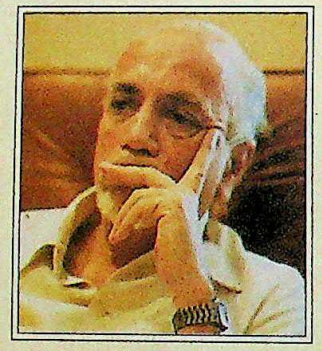
While Taj Bengal and the recently launched chains of economy class hotels, Gateway Hotels and Getaway Resorts, are among the group's latest accomplishments, it has grand plans of spreading abroad. Hotels will be set up at Moscow, Tashkent and two other locations in the USSR, at Marrakesh in Morocco, Boston in the US, and Mauritius with another to be established in an undisclosed Mediterranean country. Says Kerkar: "We are getting involved in hotel construction and technical services through Taj International (Indian Hotels' international division)."

At a time when the Tata group is in a high-growth mode, the need for some kind of overall business policy direction is critical. With three clear group heads—Russi Mody, Ratan Tata and Darbari Seth—having emerged, insiders are now speculating about how quickly the fourth (Kerkar) will rise. As early as 1983, Ratan Tata wanted to implement a strategic plan, which involved reorganising the group's activities business-wise to prevent overlapping. The plan was also to develop thrust areas for future growth. But because of a number of reasons—suspicion, vested interests, fear of losing autonomy—the strategy was implemented only partially.

As the group moves into the '90s, some of its old ways will have to change. At 86, J.R.D. Tata retains only the chairmanship of Tata Sons, the group's holding company, once a powerful organisation, but now relatively impotent and sometimes uncharitably described as a "collegiate of company chieftains who meet for tea every now and then".

Will Ratan Tata succeed in his renewed attempts to bind a group which to many seems to be rapidly moving apart? One can only speculate. Today, the various sub-groups in the Tata stable are by and large held together by the close relationships the directors have with one another besides an appreciation of group synergy and an immense sense of pride in the Tata tag. These may, however, not remain for all time to come sufficient reasons to stay together.

—SHIV TANEJA with FARZAND AHMED



S.A. SABAVALA
Vice-chairman, Tata Steel

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"The integrated concept and its financial stability made the decision to award the Haldia project easy for the West Bengal Government."

SUBRATA GANGULY
Managing Director, Associated Cement

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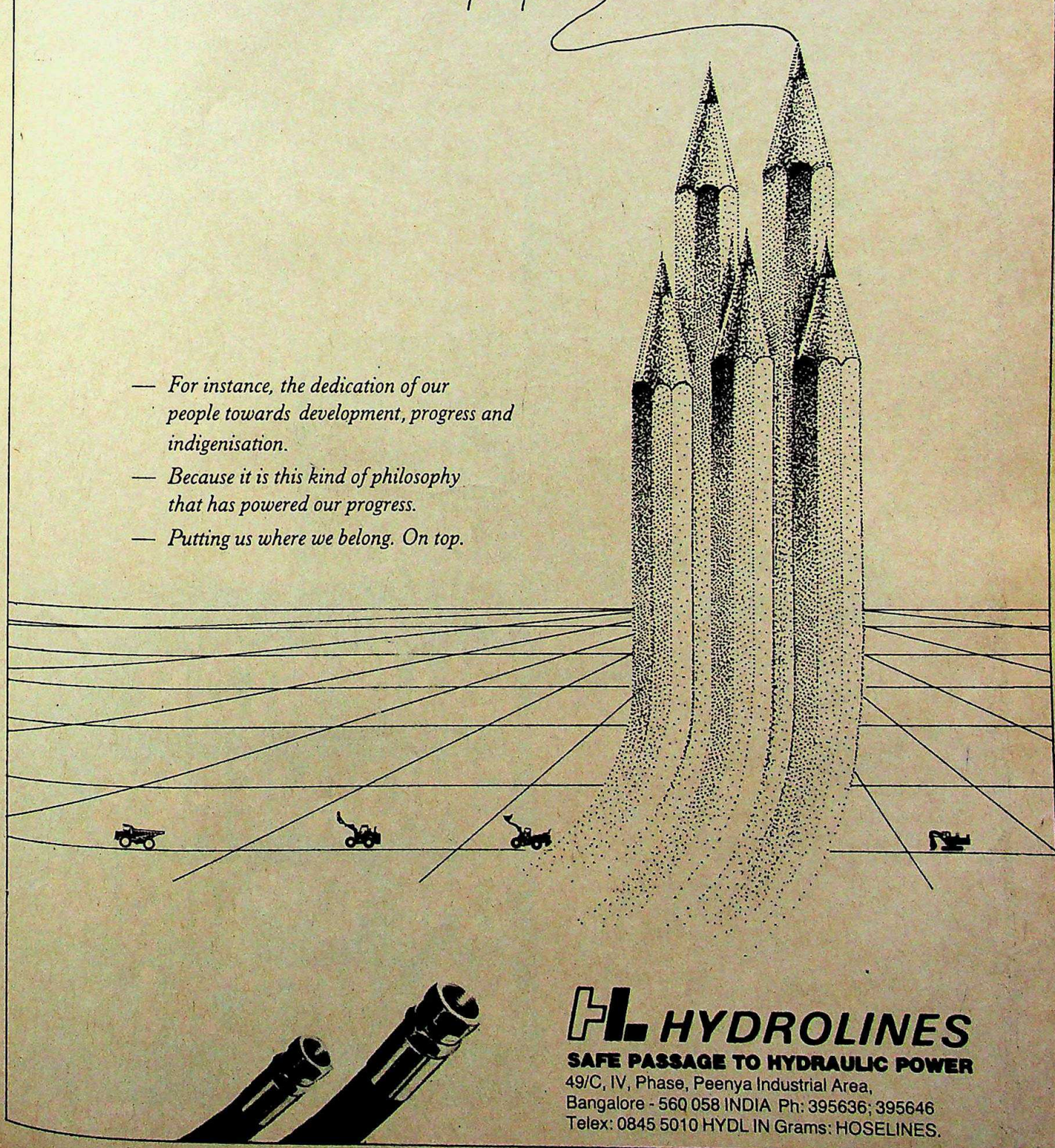

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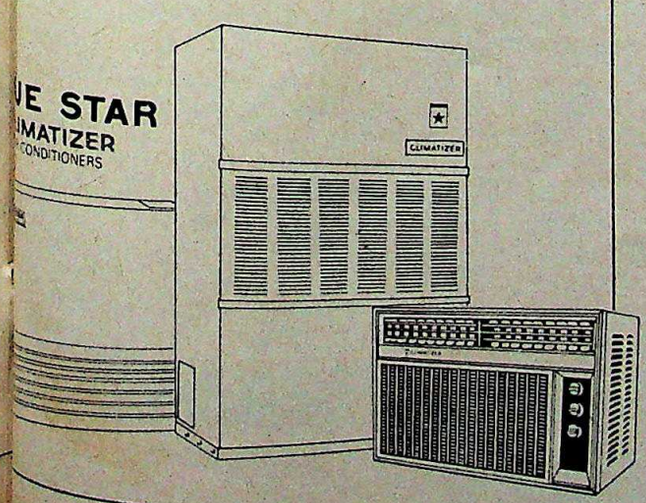

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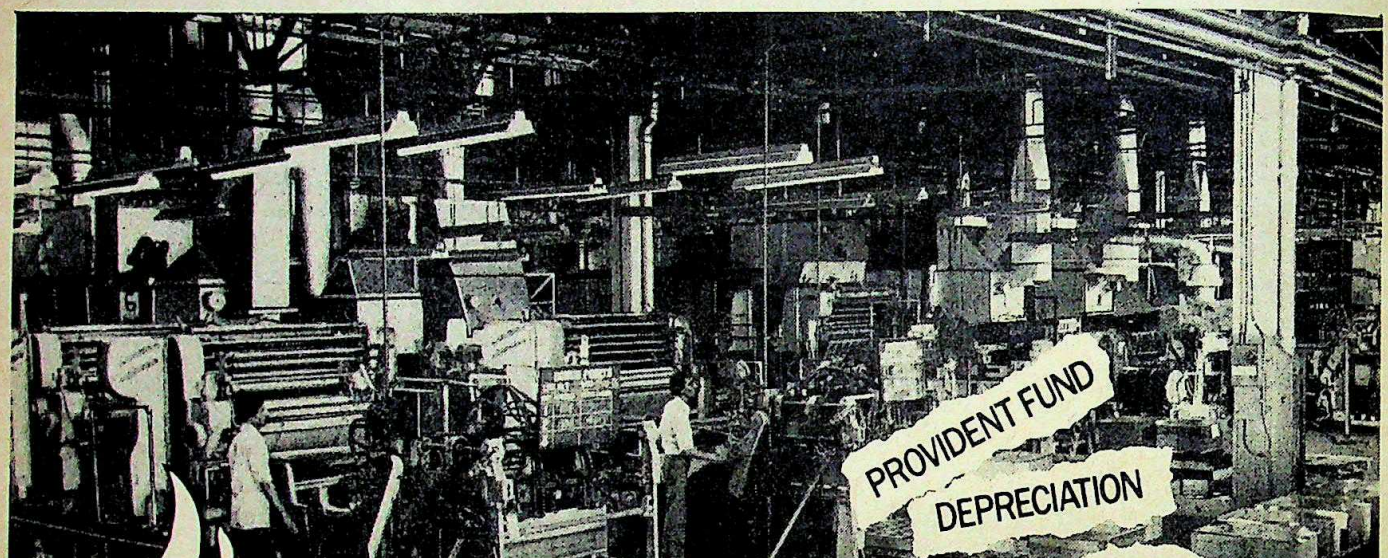

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PEPSI

Fizz Fight

Controversy over project

THE Pepsi project in Punjab has this incredible knack of remaining in the news. Last fortnight, even as the US multinational geared up to launch its first products in the capital—Cheetos, a cheese and cornflour-based snack and Hostess potato chips both priced at Rs 2.50 per small packet—it again found itself under attack.

Food Processing Minister Sharad Yadav has said the project will be reviewed by the Union Cabinet. Most strident in his criticism was Railway Minister George Fernandes who recently reiterated that Pepsi was cheating and also alleged that machinery had been under-invoiced to pay kickbacks.

But Pepsi is not without its share of proponents. Punjab's former agriculture minister Amarinder Singh dubbed these allegations "wild" and said that Fernandes was acting at the behest of an Indian soft drink manufacturer. He was obviously referring to Ramesh Chauhan of Parle whose 70 per cent monopoly over the Rs 900-crore Indian soft drink market is going to be strongly challenged by Pepsi from April.

Singh went further and wrote to the prime minister arguing against scrapping the project on the ground that since it had "generated a great deal of interest amongst our farmers and already a large number have contracted to produce various crops for it". Adds Gurtej Singh, spokesman of the Akali Dal (Mann): "The project is of utmost importance to the diversification of agriculture in the state." Last fortnight, the Punjab Argo Industries Corporation (PAIC) sent a nine-page note to the Punjab Governor N.K. Mukarji arguing that "any review (of the Pepsi project) at this stage will not only damage the project but will cause severe hardships to the horticulturists who have taken up cultivation of crops".

But Pepsi critics are not fazed by such arguments. They question the sharp increase in the total project cost from Rs 21 crore in 1986 to nearly Rs 50 crore as per last year's prices. Further, A.S. Pooni, chairman, PAIC—Pepsi's partner—has stated that the company's total financial 'exposure' may eventually be close to as much as Rs 75 crore.

However, Pepsi spokesmen claim that around Rs 15 crore extra will be spent on utilities like a standby power generator, a water treatment plant and a cold storage unit. Also, the imported machinery will cost more because of considerable devaluation of the rupee and inflation. Further, the company's decision to hike the capacity of its fruit processing line will also increase costs.

But the critics are not convinced. They point to Jadgish Tytler's November 1988 claim that the project would directly and indirectly provide jobs to more than 50,000. So far Pepsi has directly employed less than 500 and contracted to buy produce from just over 100 farmers. Says S.D. Tripathi of Panjab University: "The hopes of a horticultural revolution are misplaced—the project will not even touch the fringe of the farming community leave alone small and marginal farmers."

Pepsi and PAIC spokesmen argue that employment will go up in the years ahead—in its application to financial institutions the company has talked of an employment potential of 20,000—and that initially only a few "progressive" farmers get involved in a new project such as that of Pepsi.

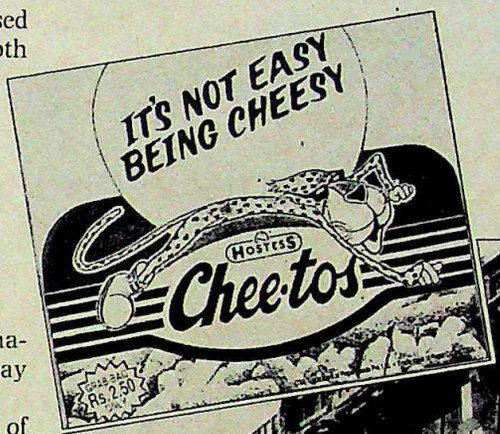
But the Punjab farmers who have got involved are unhappy that the company has so far found their tomatoes containing too little solids, their potatoes too sweet and citrus fruits too bitter. Though company sources claim this will change once the Rs 2.8-crore Ludhiana research centre starts in May, by then Pepsi will have already started processing fruits at its Hoshiarpur plant and turning out snacks and soft drinks from its Channo unit.

Incidentally, the food processing project has already been delayed by three weeks. Reason: delays in importing tractors and a tomato processing line which were held up by the customs authorities; and the financial institutions are yet to formally sanction term loans of around Rs 30 crore.

Meanwhile, people like Fernandes and Chauhan remain convinced that by clubbing soft drinks with food processing, Pepsi has "blackmailed" the only country in the world without foreign soft drink brands. But Pepsi's Co-Managing Director Asim Ghosh argues that a project like this, which will incur losses for seven years, needs a "profi-table portion to fund the unprofitable parts".

In the mean time, Pepsi keeps its fingers crossed.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with KANWAR SANDHU



T.S BEDI

Pepsi's Hoshiarpur plant; (top) cheese and cornflour-based snack; and (left) soft drinks

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THE MARKETS

Gloomy Mood

Major scrips slide

WHEN it rains, it pours. Last fortnight, the country's capital markets were flooded neck-deep in worries and woes. It was no longer a question of whether equity values would come down, but to what extent and how quickly they would. The mood was so downbeat that investors failed to act positively even when they logically should have.

For instance, the market failed to respond to the news of Tata Tea bagging the massive Rs 3,000-crore Haldia petrochemicals project from right under the nose of RPG Enterprises. Ordinarily, scrips of Tata group companies should have responded with enthusiasm. They didn't. The Tata Tea share briefly rallied from Rs 182 to Rs 195 before falling by the wayside. And the scrips of Tata Steel and TELCO lost ground. Not surprisingly, the share value of Ceat Tyres—an RPG group company—crashed by 32 per cent over the fortnight.

Another example of the depressed mood was the lukewarm reaction to the Union Finance Ministry's move to amend the guidelines governing issue of bonus shares: the gap between successive bonus issues has been reduced from two years to one. Under normal circumstances, market observers should have been jumping with joy. This time they were strangely subdued.

Since early-January, stock indices have by and large been on the decline with no signs of a quick reversal. *The Economic Times* all-India share index hit a low of 397.2 on February 6, a whopping 41 points below the January 15 level of 438.2. And the 100-scrip national index of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) slumped from 394.58 to 380.88 between January 19 and February 2.

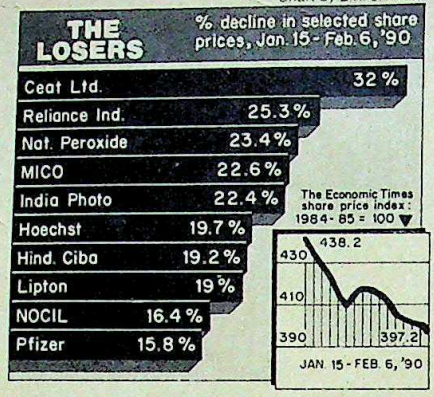
The prices of a number of blue chips including ICI, Ashok Leyland, Asian Paints, Cadbury and Pond's fell by 10 to 20 per cent in two weeks. The Reliance share went deeper into the tailspin it had entered after the National Front Government came to power, losing more than a quarter of its market value between mid-January and February 6.

That was not all. Normal payment and trading schedules went haywire after a wildcat strike by brokers at the BSE, the country's largest exchange. The decision by brokers to boycott trading on January 29 was ostensibly triggered off by a decision of the stock exchange authorities to haul up a leading member-broker. This provided an 'opportunity' to brokers to air a host of long-pending grievances relating to revision of trading regulations and procedures.

The result was that settlement of outstanding payments for delivery of cash-traded, non-specified scrips could not be completed on February 1 and the exchange had to remain closed for trading for a day four days later to complete pending business. The disruption hardly helped improve market mood.

Hope, sweet hope—that's all that remained, at least for the time being.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	1990 LOW	CLOSE 6.2.90	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	99.00	83.50	83.50	10.00 –
Associated Cement	355.00	320.00	327.50	6.50 –
Asian Paints	255.00	207.50	213.75	11.25 –
Atlas Copco	48.00	38.00	39.00	2.00 –
Bajaj Auto	417.50	380.00	390.00	5.00 –
Baroda Rayon	817.50	685.00	705.00	2.50 –
Bata India	77.50	66.00	67.00	6.00 –
Ballarpur	155.00	123.50	126.00	12.00 –
Bharat Forge	93.75	85.00	90.00	1.25 –
Birla Jute	66.00	50.50	52.50	4.50 –
Bombay Dyeing	231.00	190.00	194.00	10.00 –
Britannia Ind.	119.00	100.00	100.00	12.00 –
Brooke Bond	107.00	93.00	93.00	8.00 –
Century Spinning	2840.00	2420.00	2520.00	30.00 –
Chloride India	92.00	82.50	84.50	5.50 –
Colgate Palmolive	196.25	176.25	182.50	2.50 –
Cyanamid	115.00	92.50	92.50	10.00 –
DCM	53.50	47.75	48.25	2.25 –
Dunlop	75.50	58.50	60.00	6.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	58.50	61.00	2.00 –
Escorts	88.00	78.00	79.00	2.00 –
Finolex Cables	282.50	245.00	245.00	17.50 –
Food Specialities	122.00	101.75	103.50	1.50 –
Garware Nylon	69.00	54.00	55.00	3.00 –
G.E. Shipping	54.75	45.00	46.00	2.00 –
G.S.F.C.	185.00	155.00	162.50	nil
Grasim Ind.	129.00	106.00	108.25	5.75 –
Hind. Aluminium	270.00	220.00	225.00	30.00 *
Hind. Ciba	1660.00	1090.00	1160.00	40.00 –
Cadbury India	172.50	142.50	143.75	8.75 –
Hindustan Lever	117.50	101.00	103.00	2.25 –
Hindustan Motors	31.30	23.50	24.50	4.30 –
ICI India Ltd.	49.50	36.00	36.00	7.00 –
Indian Organic	58.75	47.00	54.00	4.00 +
Indian Rayon	108.00	84.00	86.50	3.50 –
Indrol	246.25	193.75	200.00	15.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	245.00	190.00	202.50	17.50 –
ITC	64.00	48.75	51.00	7.50 –
J.K. Synthetics	67.00	53.00	54.00	7.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	155.00	137.50	147.50	4.00 –
Kirloskar Cummins	90.00	65.00	68.75	4.25 –
KSB Pumps	210.00	190.00	197.50	2.50 +
Larsen & Toubro	85.00	62.50	65.00	7.50 –
Lipton	112.00	84.00	85.00	7.00 –
LML Ltd.	21.00	15.00	16.00	2.00 –
Madura Coats	111.00	107.00	107.00	4.00 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	103.00	72.50	75.00	12.50 – *
Milk Food	280.00	210.00	220.00	10.00 –
Motor Industries	1200.00	785.00	820.00	50.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	157.00	127.50	131.00	7.00 –
National Organic	1660.00	1260.00	1270.00	140.00 –
Nirlon	22.00	16.00	16.00	2.00 –
Orkay Silk Mills	20.50	15.25	16.00	1.25 –
Peico Electronics	32.50	24.50	25.50	3.00 –
Pfizer	113.75	85.00	86.25	4.75 –
Ponds	230.00	185.00	192.50	11.25 –
Premier Auto	74.50	63.00	64.50	nil
Raymond	76.00	70.00	73.00	1.00 +
Reliance Industries	90.00	56.00	59.00	10.00 – **
Siemens India	120.00	96.00	102.00	3.00 –
Shaw Wallace	92.00	72.50	73.00	7.00 –
Shriram Fibres	71.00	51.25	54.50	0.50 +
SKF Bearings	1570.00	1260.00	1300.00	80.00 –
SPIC	62.00	51.00	51.50	2.50 –
Tata Steel	119.75	103.75	105.75	2.00 –
Telco	130.00	110.00	112.25	5.25 –
Vam Organic	167.50	137.50	137.50	5.00 –
Videocon Int.	192.50	147.50	155.00	5.00 –
Voltas	785.00	630.00	650.00	40.00 –
Wimco	32.50	22.00	22.75	2.00 –

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Bahrain	Dinar	1	45.6230	44.5653
Bangladesh	Taka	100	54.3131	52.9213
Canada	Dollar	1	14.4194	14.2669
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.6459	2.6174
Egypt	Pound	1	6.7238	6.6417
France	Franc	1	3.0488	2.9718
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1902	2.1677
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9505	0.9356
Iran	Rial	100	25.5368	25.2559
Italy	Lira	100	1.3786	1.3613
Japan	Yen	100	11.9760	11.6822
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7921	0.7633
Kuwait	Dinar	1	58.3913	56.4493
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.3417	6.2749
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.1639	1.1481
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5972	0.5890
Netherlands	Guilder	1	9.0666	8.9697
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8074	0.7984
Singapore	Dollar	1	9.1637	9.0657
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1582	0.1564
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4301	0.4255
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.8010	2.7721
Switzerland	Franc	1	11.4708	11.3428
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0950	0.0891
Thailand	Baht	100	67.3568	65.3853
UK	Pound	1	28.7646	26.5551
USA	Dollar	1	17.1086	16.9348
UAE	Dirham	1	4.6605	4.6094
USSR	Rouble	1	27.5723	27.2702
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	10.3520	10.0908

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 3.2.90.

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5. BIGGER REFILL WITH MORE INK

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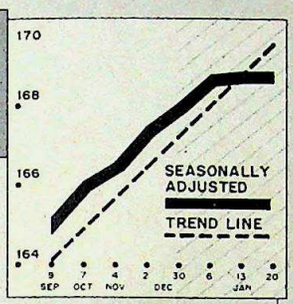
There's better news this fortnight for the economy. Inflation seems to have tapered off—temporarily at least—and industrial growth revived, putting an end to fears of an impending recession. Manufacturing output in particular was more buoyant than before. A dip in electricity output is the major disturbing factor on the industrial front and needs immediate attention by the Government before bottlenecks to industrial growth emerge.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1981-82 = 100

Current Trend
8.9% p.a.

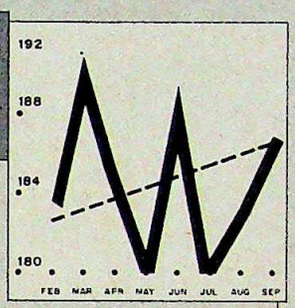


All through the last fortnight, wholesale prices remained absolutely stable—a welcome change after a stubborn period of inflation.

Industrial Production Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
3.7% p.a.

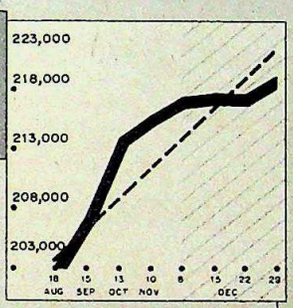


For the second successive month, industrial growth registered a healthy trend—evidence that a recession isn't round the corner.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
22.3% p.a.

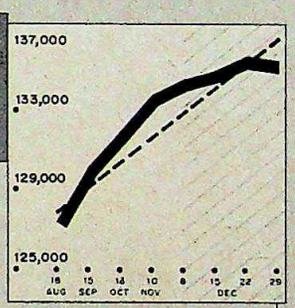


The supply of money in the economy remained in control during the last fortnight. But the long-term trend is above target.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
18.3% p.a.

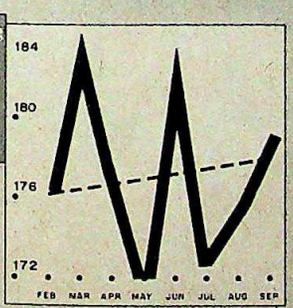


Credit conditions were tight during the last fortnight, increasing at an annualised rate of just 10 per cent.

Manufacturing Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
1.6% p.a.

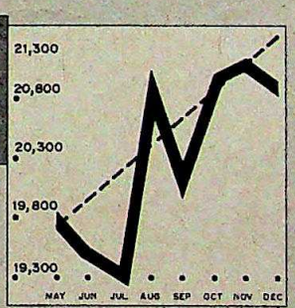


The manufacturing sector showed a faster rate of growth compared with last month, ending a period of stagnation.

Electricity Generation

Mill kWh

Current Trend
13.5% p.a.

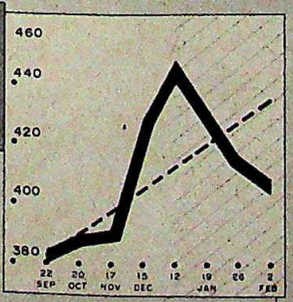


The decline in power generation—an important infrastructural input—last month was a major disappointment for industry.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
34.6% p.a.



Share price indices showed a sharp drop as the stock-market suffered an intense attack of pre-budget jitters.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
14.2% p.a.

The rising trend that gold prices had shown in recent months came to an end. Gold prices remained stable during the last fortnight.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of January 1990

	% Growth
Gur	18.16
Tapioca	8.83
Chillies	7.70
Rubber	6.60
Betel-Nuts	6.40
Linseed	4.52
Tyres	4.41
Hides Raw	4.23
Boilers	4.08
Camel Back	3.82
Gram	3.63
Tubes	3.47
Rice	3.22
Gingelly Oil	3.07
Cotton Cloth	2.74
Maida	2.25
Logs Timber Bamboo	2.12
Eggs	1.97
Mining Machinery	1.95
Coconut Oil	1.94
Groundnut Oil	1.93
Coal	1.88
Pig Iron	1.88
Rails	1.83
Retrol	1.75
Aluminium	1.69
Silk & Artificial Fabrics	1.65
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	1.62
Bars & Rods	1.60
Urad	1.52
Machine Tools	1.49
Cigarettes	1.48
Arhar	1.44
Polythene Moulding Powder	1.41
Semis Billets	1.38
Bolts & Nuts	1.33
Diesel Oil	1.29
Steel Structurals	1.23
Ceramic Tiles	1.21
Plates & Sheets	1.15
Woollen Cloth & Woollen Khadi	1.14
Lubricating Oil	1.05
Soda Ash	1.04
Coir Fibre	1.02
Nylon/Terene and Mixed Cloth	0.99
Ghee	0.97
Steel Furniture	0.96

Of the 139 series considered, 79 of them with a total weight of 49.664 had a positive growth and 55 of them with a total weight of 35.188 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Letter of Intents		
Numbers, December	70	213
Industrial Licences		
Numbers, December	48	48
Electricity		
Million kWh, December	21715	19800
Plant Load Factor		
Per Cent, December	60.3	58.0
Revenue Earning Traffic		
Per Cent, December	27.77	27.12

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Where there's smoke, there's fire. Where there's Steelage fire-resisting equipment, there's security.

Funny thing about fire. It teaches a lesson too late! What remains are the ashes of one's dream, built by sweat and hard work. Fortunately, most things one values in life are insurable. House, office building, factory, plant and machinery, jewellery. All these are replaceable.

But some things are irreplaceable.

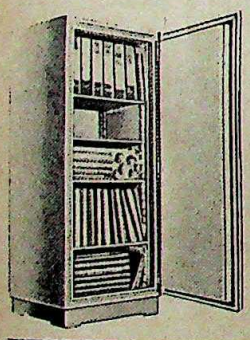
Paper for one.

Title deeds, documentary proof, research papers. Just think of one precious paper or document in your possession. Is it replaceable? At what cost?

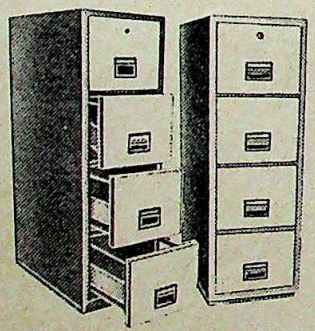
Business is built on paper and today on computer data. Loss of records – such as account books, stock records, sales ledgers and customer lists – results in break in trading. Cash flow stops. You don't know to whom you owe money. Worse, you don't know who owes you money. And how much!

Fire-fighting readiness alone isn't enough. It makes business sense to have fire-protection readiness, too, Steelage.

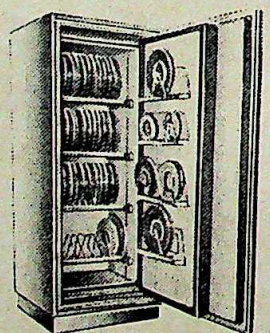
Firebrand Fire-Resisting Cabinet



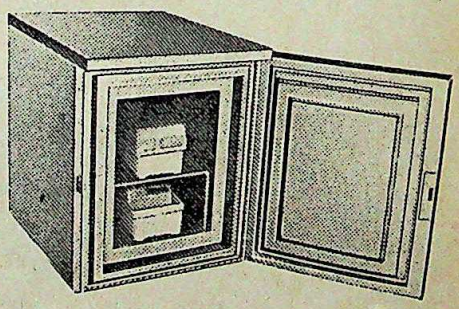
Firebrand Fire-Resisting Filing Cabinet



Dataguard-Fire-Protection Computer Data Cabinet



Micro Cabinet for storage of floppy disks



How fire-resistance is created
Every frame in the construction of the cabinet is perfectly aligned, to the precise fire-resistance standards.

The walls and doors of the cabinet are lined with tested fire-resistant materials. This insulates the interior against strong heat.

The heat-resisting insulation is solid and stable and can also withstand fall impact at high temperatures.

Chubb-tested fire-resisting material
The fire-resistance technology of Steelage is the result of continuous, on-going R&D effort of over 100 years by Chubb. The fire-resistance material presently used is specially developed by Chubb to retain solidity and stability and does not deteriorate with age.

Steelage wins the CBRI certificate in fire-fighting fitness
Instead of pouring the fire-resisting material, these are now lined along the door and walls of the cabinet. The fire-resisting material itself is far superior and there are other areas where the fire-resisting quality has been enhanced to the latest international standards. Steelage fire-resisting cabinets and filing cabinets have successfully passed the CBRI, Roorkee test for both fire-resistance and impact.

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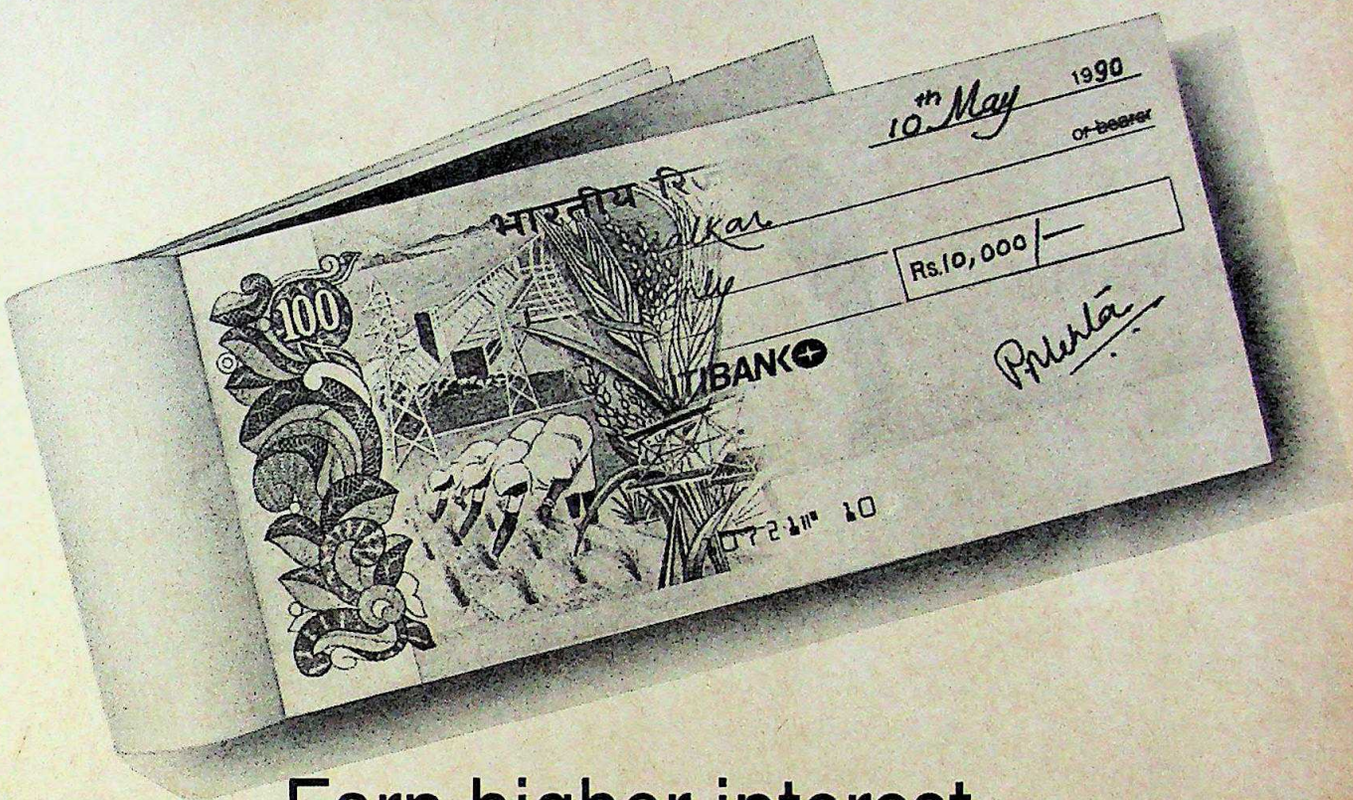

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Period	Rate %	Yield % p.a. (Compounded return)
46 days	8%	—
1 year	9%	9.31
2 years	10%	10.92
3 years	10%	11.49

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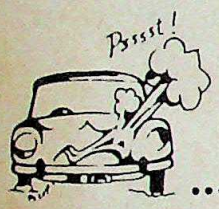

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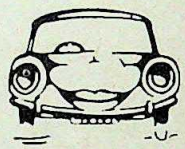
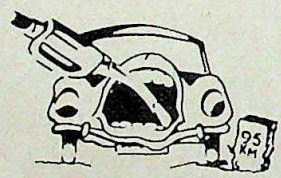
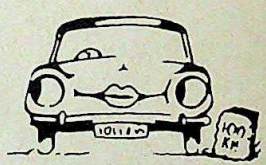




...save fuel.



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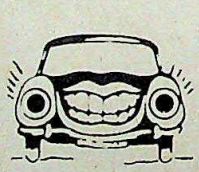

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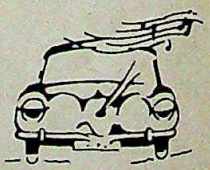

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A voice distinct and soothing

ALL YOU WHO SLEEP TONIGHT
by VIKRAM SETH
Viking
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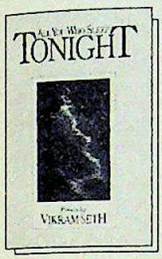

The world is too opaque, distressing, and profound./ This twenty minutes' rendezvous will make my day. For most, the latest rendezvous with Vikram Seth should last all of several 20 minutes; and it also ought to make the day for those who deem poetry is to be read, and not merely analysed, interpreted, and be boggled by. In particular, it ought to please those who need the balm of easeful art to momentarily bury the aches of a world too opaque, distressing and profound.

All You Who Sleep Tonight picks up from where Seth's 1985 collection, *The Humble Administrator's Garden*, left off. There is the same quiet elegance of tone, the meditative sweep of the placid eye, the relaxed turn of phrase of the uncrusading pen: *We did not deal in words or tears./ At the dead light we did not rage./ What change had crept through our forked years/ We did not have the will to gauge.*

And more than ever before, Seth uses the scalpel of his skill as a versifier to keep the anarchy of the unplanned line at bay. No flood of words, images, dreams, Freudian allusions, mythic invocations sweeps over his verse drowning out his particular voice. And the voice is distinct: unburdened by the weight of 'India' that other Indian poets feel bound to bear: scrupulously honest to its well-springs; gently ironic with no trace of a sneer; and in an era of the unharnessed line, traditional in its prosody—neo-formal—maintaining tight rhyme schemes and metre. Each poem studiously observes Yeats' decree and "comes close with a shut like a clicking box".

But some click shut too facilely. In fact, with the poet using mostly simple rhyme schemes, every now and then a metronomic tenor sets in. Of the five sections Seth divides his book into, one, *Quatrains*, falls victim to triteness. For example, *Passage* reads: *Your eyes, my understanding, all will rot:/ The trees we see, the books we read, will go;/ The way that we use words, as like as not;/ And we are fortunate that this is so.* Most of the 20-odd four-liners prove too long to have the terse haunting quality of haikus, and too short to create any kind of poetic ambience—which Seth's longer poems in the other sections do successfully.

The finest section is *In Other Voices*, where Seth speaks with an authentic ring through a range of persona—from that of a Nazi concentration camp commander to Ghalib: *In my old eulogy, for Amjad Ali's name/ I've slotted "Wajid" in; but God has done the same./ Such verse in praise of kings, just notch it down a peg:/ I wrote it not to show my prowess but to beg.*

Seth: meditative sweep

ARADHANA SETH

Then there is the victim of the Hiroshima nuclear holocaust, who concludes his day's journal entry so: *The face of an old woman on the ground/ Was marred with suffering, but she made no sound./ Silence was common to us all. I heard/ No cries of anguish, or a single word.* That is the poet's distinguishing talent: no cries of anguish, no whoops of joy, merely a gentle music, be it of elation or lament. There is detail in these poems, but essentially Seth is a ventriloquist; the voice that issues through the mask is his. It is dipped in sympathy and is unacerbic, even when it speaks for the Nazi commander: *I had one day to decide. At first the thought of/ Uprooting myself from Auschwitz made me unhappy./ So involved had I grown in its tasks and troubles./ But in the end I was glad to gain my freedom.*

In the rest of the collection, Seth is clearly speaking for himself. *Romantic Residues* consists of poems that remark on the little deceptions and fleeting nostalgia that make for the love game. A suitcase at the airport terminal sparks off memory of a long ago affair; a smile flings open doors that lead nowhere; a loveless tryst ends with feeble hypocrisies.

Meditations of the Heart contains the title poem, a superb lyric eight-liner. The other notable poem here is *Poet*, written for Irina Ratushinskaya. Then, as in his earlier two collections, the poet touches, almost plaintively, upon the emotional tug of his nuclear family. Typically, all these poems do not stun and seize with their imagery and passion, but lull and soothe with their quietude and gentle rhythms.

Seth the traveller surfaces *In Other Places*. While the poem on the Golden Gate doesn't work, others display his special talent for capturing—and making magical—mundane moments in foreign lands. They are, however, not as impressive as those in *The Humble Administrator's Garden*. In fact, at best, this collection is merely on par with his earlier one. Those ferreting for growth are bound to be disappointed. As for Seth, he can always steal a line from Philip Larkin, and disdainfully disclaim the poet's obligation to develop.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

All You Who Sleep Tonight

All you who sleep tonight
Far from the ones you love,
No hand to left or right,
And emptiness above—

Know that you aren't alone.
The whole world shares
your tears,
Some for two nights or one,
And some for all their years.

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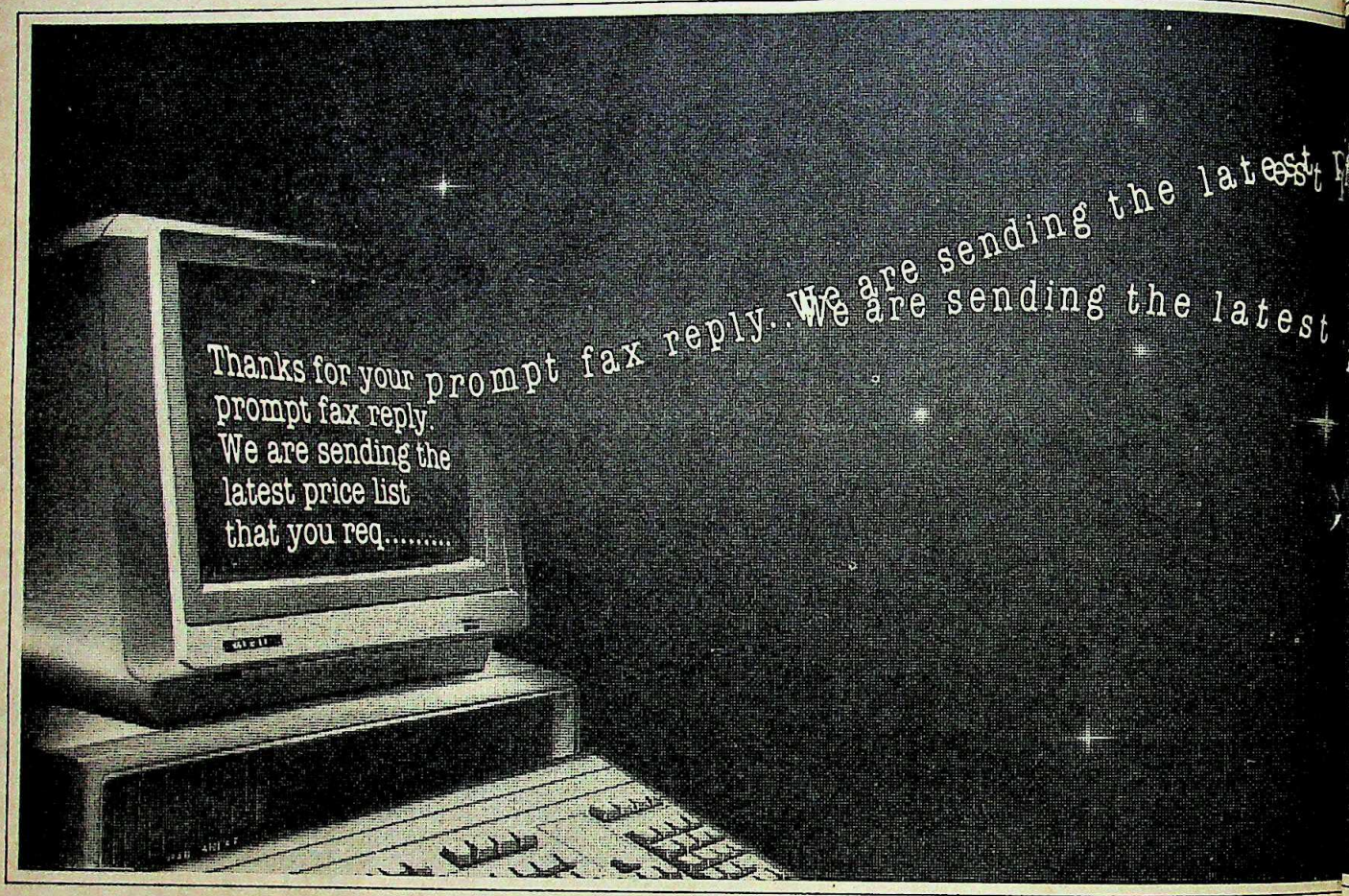

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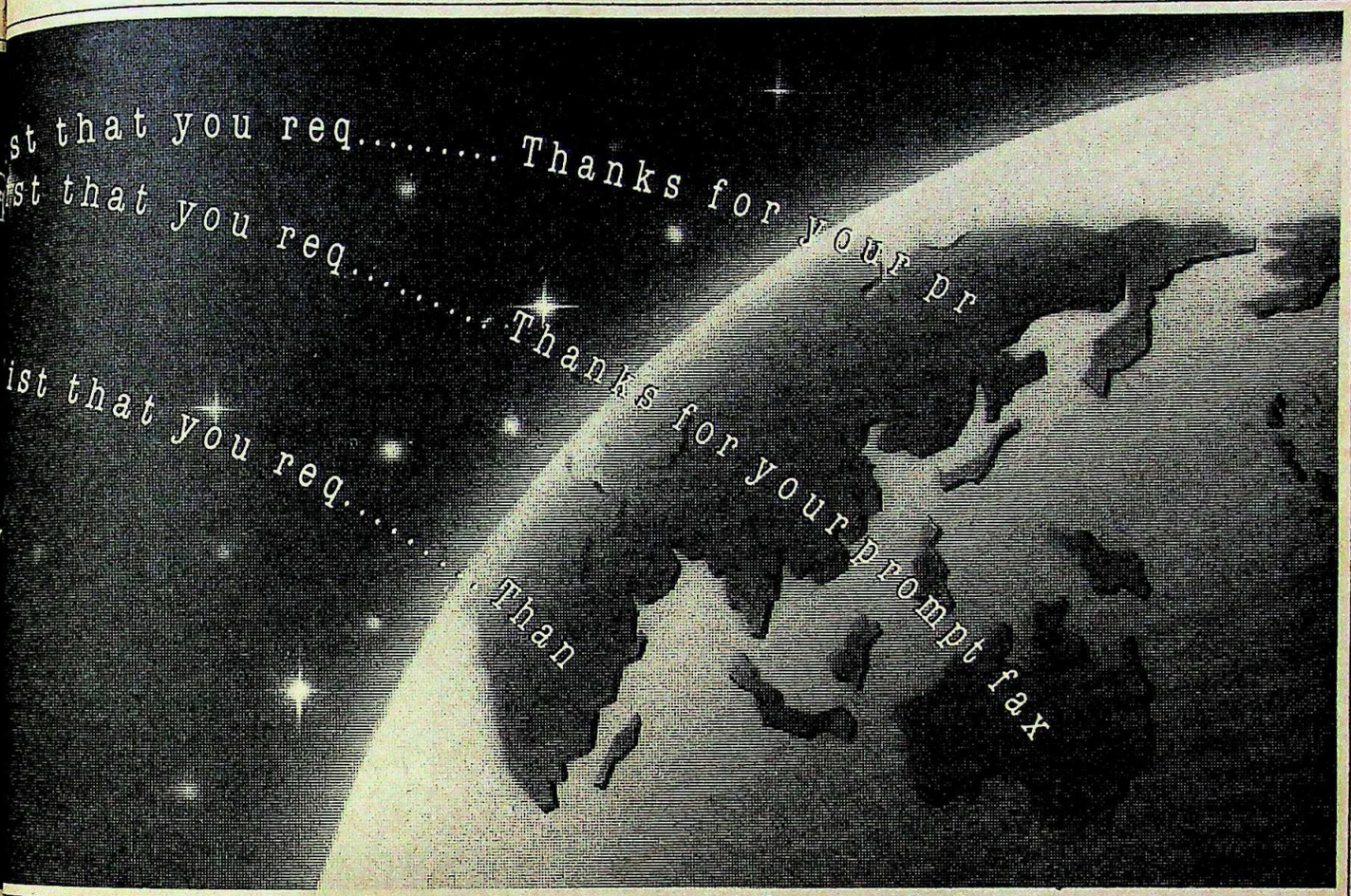

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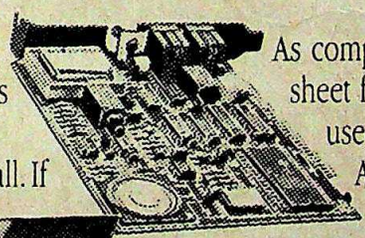

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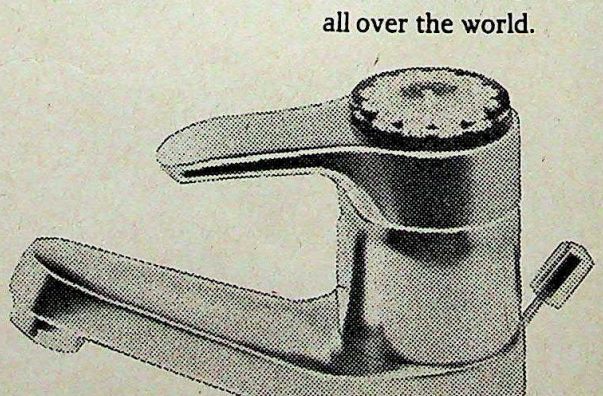

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L. SUBRAMANIAM

On a High Note

Violin virtuoso's neo-fusion enthrals

HIS steps are shy but purposeful. He walks across the stage, takes a quick bow, then turns his back to the crowded gathering. And then L. Subramaniam, 43, instructs the lead violinist of the Collegium Instrumentale Halle from East Germany to begin.

Later, sitting cross-legged, his eyes shut, he places his bow on the taut strings of his electric violin. The result is magical. And the sounds of the Baroque harmony of his *Spring Rhapsody*, dedicated to Bach, continue to reverberate long after the performance has ended.

Last fortnight, as Subramaniam toured the country, he reinforced his reputation as a creative composer, a confident conductor, and a violin virtuoso. But it has been a long and arduous journey.

Though the two-year-old Subramaniam had shown a penchant for vocal music, a diphtheria attack ruled out singing as a vocation. At the age of six, when he held a violin for the first time, he struck the right chord. Trained by father Lakshminarayana, he mesmerised audiences at temple festivals.

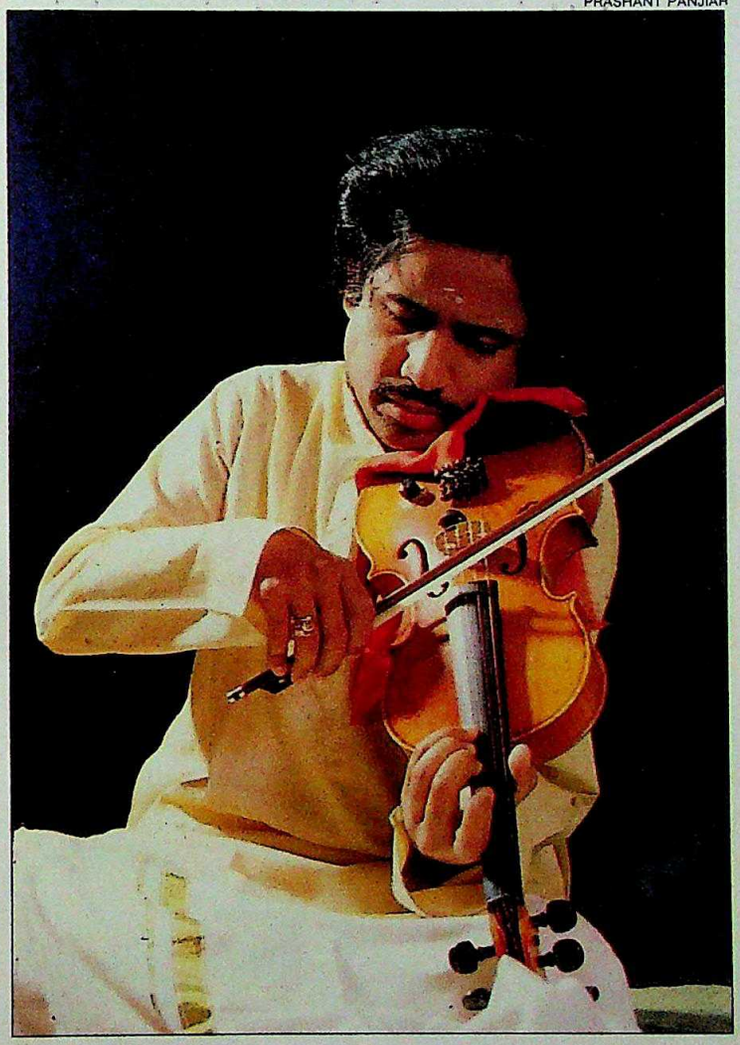
Though trained to be a doctor of medicine, Subramaniam was initiated into playing the violin by the late mridangam player, Palghat Mani Iyer. It was a tough decision for him since violinists tended to be marginalised to the back rows of an orchestra.

Subramaniam formed a violin trio with his two brothers, L. Vaidyanathan and L. Shankar, and began performing all over India. Then he applied for a master's in music at Madras, to be told that the study took six years. So he went to the California Institute of the Arts and got a master's in nine months.

In the US, he realised the technical superiority of western classical music. Says he: "My major hurdle was technical skills." Worse, he was playing a totally western instrument. Says he: "I realised I was competing with a strong tradition. You are judged not as a Carnatic violinist but as only a violinist."

But an undeterred Subramaniam worked hard. As he experimented, he evolved a distinct style combining the rhythm of the East with the harmonic progressions of the West. He also wanted to be a composer, though there was little scope for his zany improvisations. Says he: "It was next to impossible, for most orchestras only played Beethoven and Bach." Former Beatle George Harrison invited him to perform with him and Ravi Shankar on a 1974 US tour. However, Subramaniam wanted to be a soloist; he didn't want to become what jazz musicians call "sidemen".

PRASHANT PANJIAR



The decision to go it alone was risky. But it proved wise. The late '70s were an exciting period for him. The people he collaborated with included jazz musician Miles Davis, guitarist Stu Goldberg and saxophonist John Handy. And with renowned jazz musician Herbie Hancock, he created *Miss Melody* in his distinctive neo-fusion style. Four memorable albums were released—*Indian Express*, released in India as *India 2000*, *Spanish Wave* and *Mani and Company*, with Maynard Fergusson, and *Conversations* with Stephane Grappelli.

The sparing use of his own violin set apart his compositions. Says he: "When I write an ensemble piece, I'm a composer. The structure and tonality dictate the music." And he achieved the perfect balance between the Indian and western systems. Says he: "I can't write a line for the violin and expect trumpets to echo it."

But while the lietmotif of his compositions is Indian—for example, *Conversations* is based on raga Bhairavi—the eastern elements do not dominate. Says he: "You can't expect westerners to play a pure form of raga Todi, just as you can't expect Indian percussionists to transcribe Bach. So, I find common ground."

The death of his mother, Seethalakshmi, an accomplished veena player, in 1984 moved him into creating one of his finest orchestral pieces, *Fantasy on Vedic Chants*, later premiered at the prestigious Lincoln Centre for Performing Arts in New York in 1985.

The Indian response to his innovative synthesis hasn't been positive. Says he: "In India, if you mix forms of music, instead of hailing you as a versatile performer, they blame you." However, even his critics recognise Subramaniam's inimitable style and his evident mastery over the instrument.

Described by *The New York Times* as "one of the greatest violinists of our time", Subramaniam continues to surpass himself. Says he: "It is silly not to grow. We will continue to push the boundaries of music. We must not underestimate ourselves." For two decades he has done precisely that. And elevated violinists to the front row of musicians.

—SALIL TRIPATHI in Delhi and Bombay

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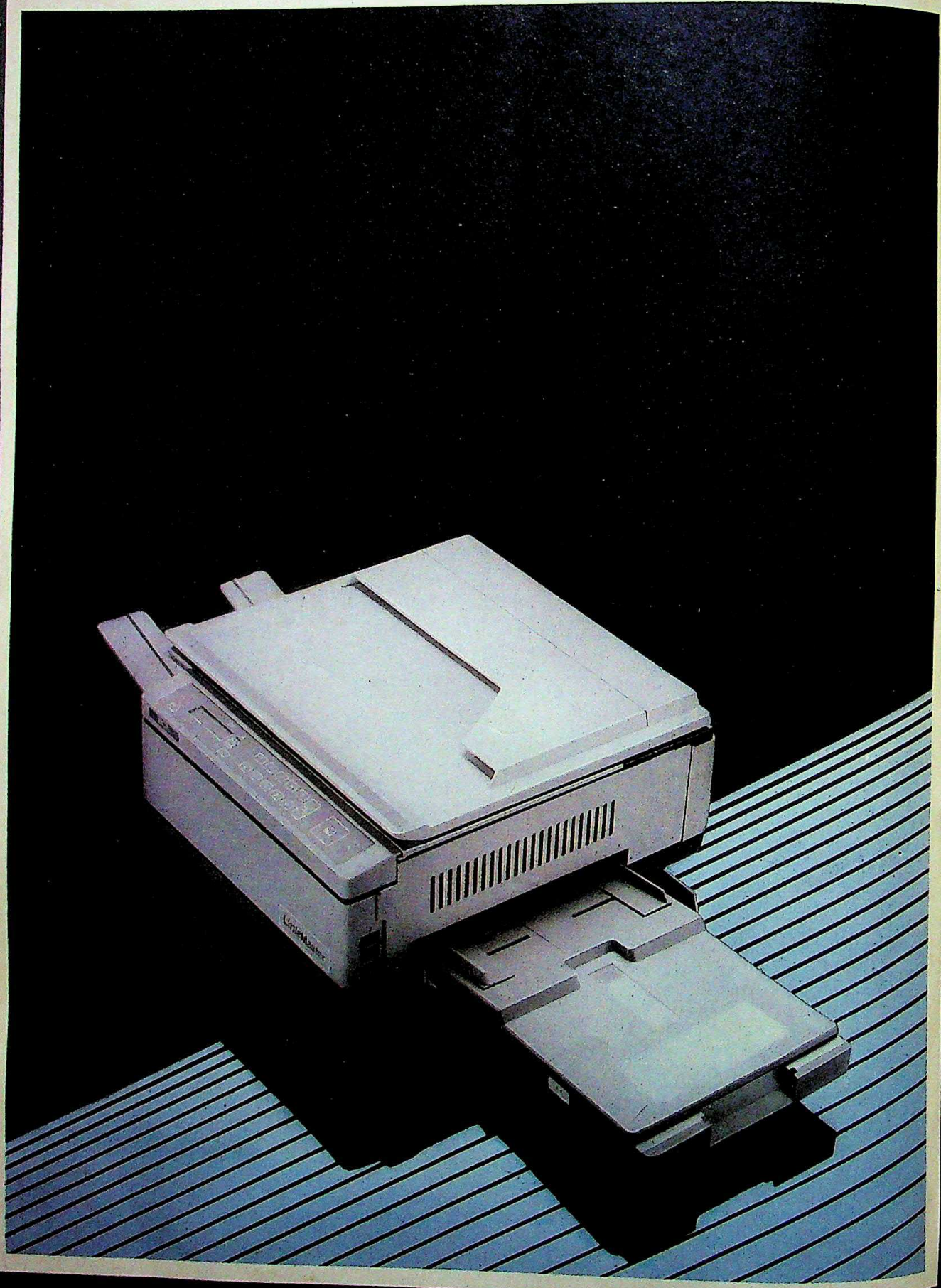

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MODELLING

The Capital Catwalks

Delhi is the country's new glamour centre

▶ *The Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) fashion show debuts in India. The venue—New Delhi.*

▶ *Sheena Singh, a Delhi girl, outdoes hundreds of aspirants from all over the country to win the competition for best model sponsored by YSL.*

▶ *The best fashion photographer award is won by Prabuddho Dasgupta, from Delhi. The runner-up is Rohit Chawla, also from Delhi.*

▶ *Lakme, looking for a fresh face for their new advertisement campaign, asks its agency to look in the north, specifically Delhi.*

THESE are not just isolated happenings. What they all add up to is a trend that has unobtrusively impacted on India's glamorous modelling scene. Namely, that Bombay's near-total monopoly as the modelling and fashion capital of India is now being vigorously challenged by Delhi, once sneered at as a provincial hick-town.

Today, the capital is replete with models, fashion photographers, art directors and modelling agents, fashion designers and model co-ordinators enjoying varying degrees of recognition—and success. The floodgates opened in 1986-88 when many advertising agencies opened offices in Delhi and began to handle major accounts. Says Nikhil Nehru, senior vice-president and manager of Hindustan Thompson Associates Limited (HTA), an advertising agency: "Our annual turnover has increased from Rs 7 crore to Rs 26 crore in just four years. Today, modelling is big business in Delhi."

No longer do major clients look to Bombay for their models. As Kamal Hazuria, who runs Catwalk, a modelling agency, says: "I'm asked to provide models by Delhi-based advertisement agencies for big clients like Nescafe, Bata, Usha, Four Square and JCT." Today, modelling agencies are mushrooming and Delhi models command the same fees as their Bombay counterparts.

That is certainly no mean achievement. Barely four years ago, Delhi models were relegated to the minor placings in the modelling ladder. But today clients no longer have to fly in Bombay models for advertising campaigns. Says Queenie Singh, 24, the Sunsilk girl and one of Delhi's top models: "I get ample work while being in Delhi."

"There was a time when I used to do my own make-up and hair. Today, every little detail, like a matching bangle, is co-ordinated by professionals."

ROHIT CHAWLA

FIROZ GUJRAL

Adds Rohit Chawla, photographer and model co-ordinator with HTA: "Five years ago, 80 per cent of our fashion photography was done by Bombay-based photographers, today 80 per cent is done by Delhi."

Several models in the capital like Firoz Gujral, Priya Kakkar, Queenie Singh, Shikha Swaroop, Sheena Singh, Ravi Dhawan, Mark Robinson and Gurpreet Singh Bajaj are among the most sought-after in the country. Explains Padmini Lulla, who is one of the oldest modelling agents of Delhi: "The myth that anything glamorous just has to come from Bombay and that it always offers the best, has been exploded."

The signs are everywhere. Says Komal G.B. Singh, who manages Adwave, one of the country's oldest and biggest modelling agenices: "Earlier we used to lose all our good models to Bombay. Anu Aggarwal, Kiran Juneja, Anu Ahuja, Sonu Walia, are all Delhi girls who subsequently migrated to Bombay. But this trend has more or less ceased since the last two to three years and that says a lot."

What also says a lot is the fact that more and more young boys and girls of the capital, mostly college-going, coming from middle class, conventional families are attracted by the glamour, money and

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Komal G.B. Singh (centre) with models

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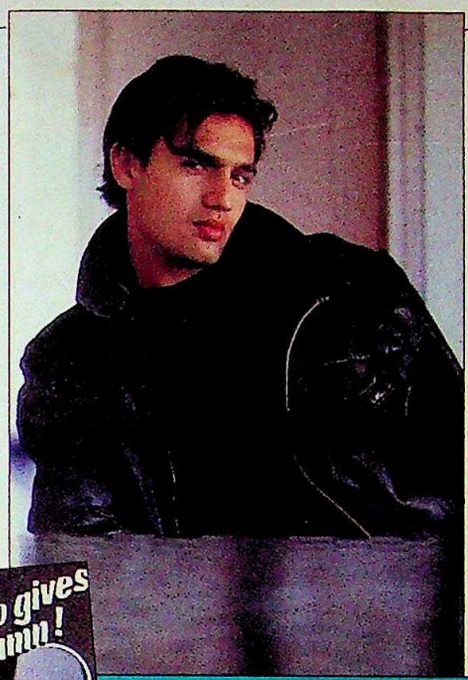
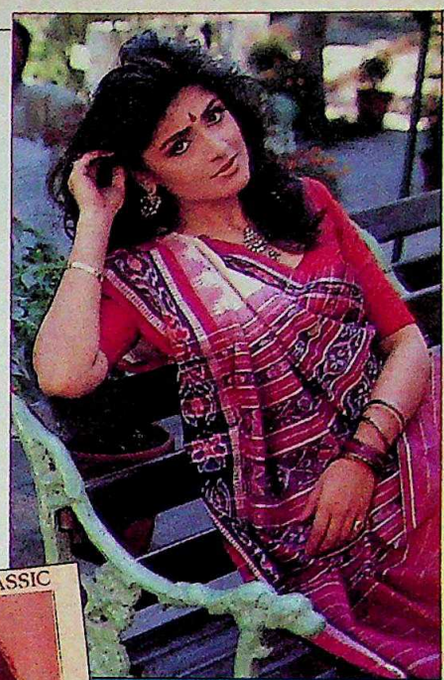
"Delhi models are equally good, but are not acknowledged. I'm often asked about where I shot in Bombay about the advertisements I've done in Delhi."

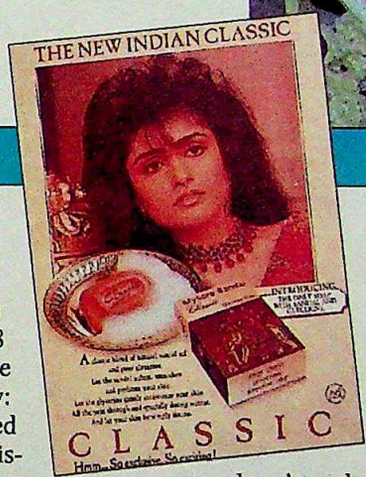


MARK ROBINSON

"Now there is really no need for me to go hunting for modelling assignments to Bombay. I get more than enough work while staying on in Delhi."



QUEENIE SINGH



recognition offered by the modelling profession. Komal has as many as 250 to 300 aspirants dropping in every month looking for opportunities. Says Prabuddho Dasgupta, 32: "A lot of people are entering the profession for wrong reasons, but yes, entering they are."

WHAT gave impetus to Delhi's emergence on the country's modelling scene were models like Firoz Gujral, one of the best known faces in India. Gujral, who has done successful campaigns like Usha fans, Raymonds, Digjam, Nivea cream and Thums Up, pioneered the trend of Delhi models being flown to Bombay rather than the other way around. Says she: "I was the first one from Delhi who refused to migrate to Bombay and yet got away with it."

This despite Bombay's inherent advantages—better infrastructural facilities, including state-of-the-art dubbing and editing studios. "The clients are today willing to bear this extra expenditure. This proves beyond doubt that Delhi models have carved a niche for themselves," says Queenie Singh.

With most major advertising agencies opening offices in Delhi and handling major accounts, even the lack of infrastructure is fast being remedied. Says Shikha Swaroop, 1988 Miss India and one of the busiest models today: "Delhi's dilapidated modelling and advertising agencies of four years ago have given way to hi-tech ones which handle major accounts." Swaroop still finds Bombay more professional but is sure that soon Delhi will be equally good.

Part of the reason is that the advertising industry has witnessed tremendous growth in the last few years and Bombay has not been able to keep up with the demand, or produce enough fresh new faces as clients were demanding. Catwalk alone has as many as 400 aspiring models registered on their files.

Kalpana Deswal, who has just set up a training academy called Circuit 2000, was swarmed by 400 boys and girls right after the first advertisement about the agency appeared in the papers. "My academy follows the pattern of the Chicago-based John Robert Powers School of Modelling and will send out perfectly trained, professional models," she claims. The establishment of professional training institutes, feels Deswal, shows that the profession has begun to be taken seriously.

Delhi also has a more relaxed working atmosphere compared to fast-paced Bombay. Says Tisca Zareen Aurora, 19, winner of several beauty contests and a budding model: "Modelling in Delhi is more relaxed than in Bombay. There it's just work and more work."

Parental attitudes have, in fact, played a major role in Delhi's emergence as a new modelling and fashion centre. Says Komal: "Gone are the days when paranoid parents used to tag along with their daughter during a shoot."

What has helped the industry to come in its own in the capital is the commercial splurge on television. Says Swaroop: "TV ads have helped it gain popular acceptability. They depict happy families complete with children and grandparents. This makes the ad world more real. Why, my grandmom also wants to model."

As a natural corollary to this growth is the manifold increase in the money involved in modelling. Delhi models were among the lowest paid in the business. But no longer. Says Gurpreet Singh Bajaj, 28, who has been around for a decade now: "Payments have improved by more than six times. Today, I get Rs 10,000 for the same job which would've fetched me just Rs 1,500 five years ago." Aurora, who has just begun her modelling career, charges Rs 3,000 on an average for every photograph accepted by an agency. Two years ago, she would have had to be satisfied with Rs 1,000.

The cheque seems to have finally arrived. Bombay still holds sway over the modelling and fashion scene. But Delhi, not content with being merely the political hub, is now making a serious bid to become the glamour capital as well.

—SHARMILA CHANDRA

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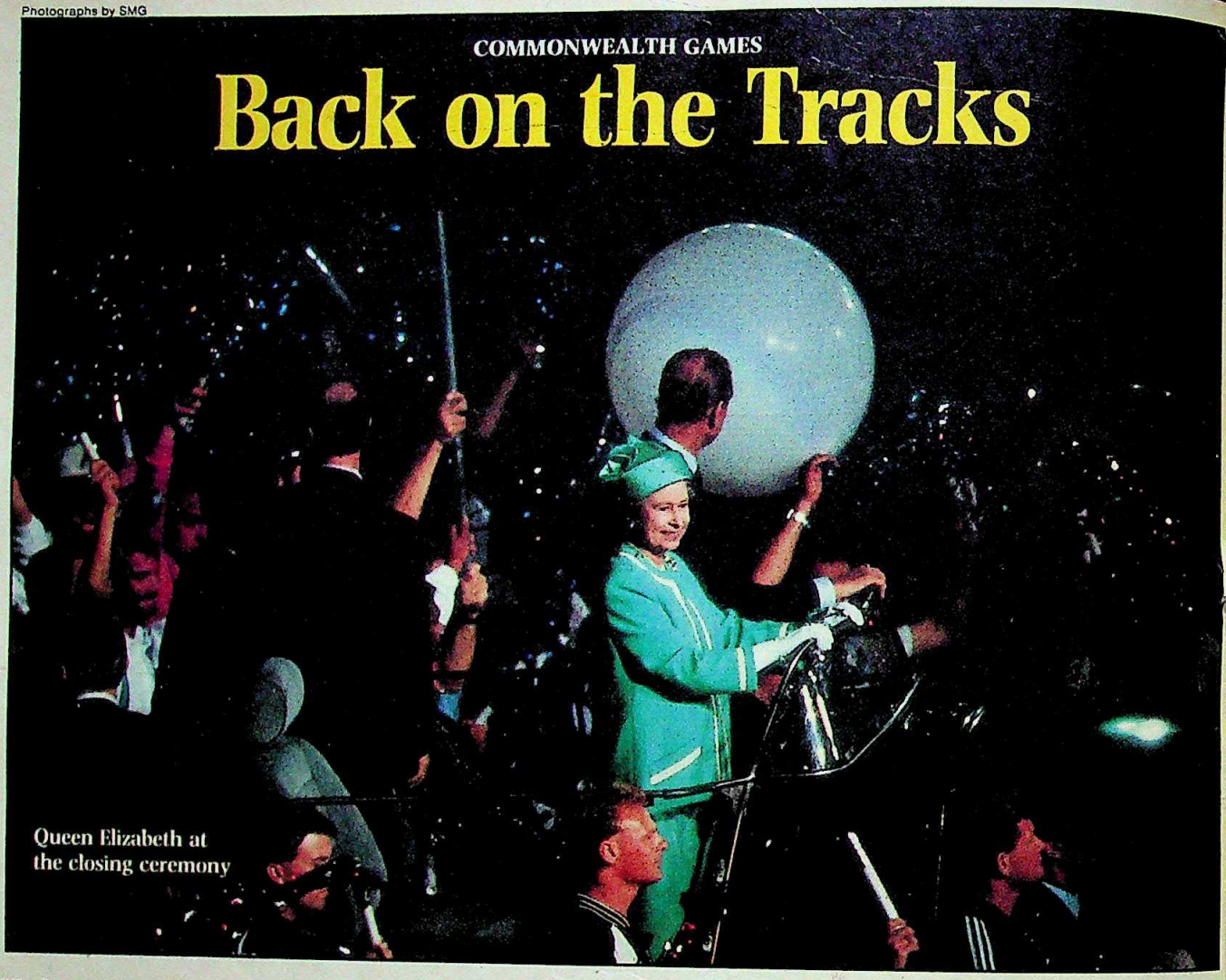
COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Back on the Tracks



Queen Elizabeth at the closing ceremony

WITH the curtain having dropped on the XIV Commonwealth Games in Auckland, New Zealand, the significance and success of the event were being assessed and evaluated last fortnight. What is obvious is that the event has heralded the "rebirth of the Commonwealth Games", as one official put it.

The last Commonwealth Games, held four years ago in Edinburgh, Scotland, were disrupted by a boycott by African, Carribean and many Asian countries, including India, on the issue of economic sanctions against South Africa and turned out to be a financial disaster. Most participants and officials in Edinburgh believed that the 1986 games could possibly be the last Commonwealth Games, so shaky was its foundation.

The spectre of boycott loomed over Auckland as well. Fortunately, the Africans did not go ahead with a boycott despite the rebel English cricket tour and the Australian rugby team in South Africa. "A boycott here in Auckland once again would almost certainly have spelt doom for the games. No one would have wanted to host the Games ever again," says Peter Heatly, chairman, Commonwealth Games Federation.

The Auckland Games organisers, who had a hard time trying to convince companies to put money into the games, utilised the services of professional organisations like Pascoe Nally International (PNI) right from the start. They put up the entire bid proposal for Auckland and roped in sponsors to pick up the tab. A local brewery, Dominion Breweries (DB), whose beer sells the most in New Zealand, financed the bid and once the games were awarded to Auckland, PNI went full steam ahead to get in big money from the sponsors. Says Malcom Beattie, chairman of the PNI's New Zealand segment: "We had to get the sponsors to believe that being the official sponsors for various sections of the games would be a profitable venture in advertising and that they would get a good rub-off."

A good rub-off they did get. DB's was the official beer, Toyota the official transporters, Unisys the official results suppliers, and they provided the entire computer system costing about 10 million New Zealand dollars (Rs 10.8 crore). Even BP, the petroleum company, provided fuel for all vehicles used for the games.

The drug scandals, of course, were an unforeseen set-back. The Commonwealth Games have so far managed to avoid any major scandal but in Auckland no less than three weightlifters tested

Ricky Chaplin of Wales: doped

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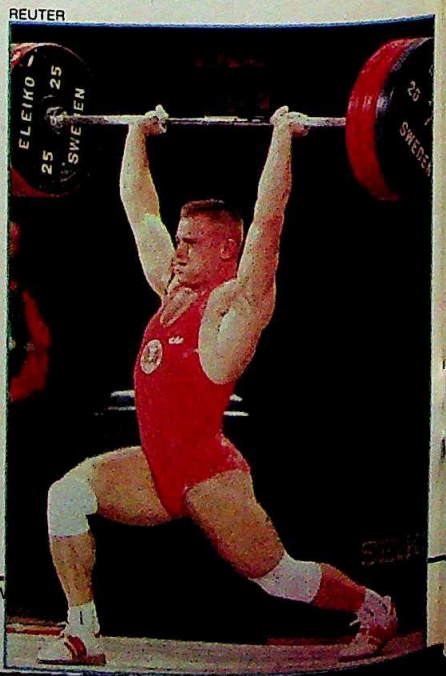

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positive for usage of banned steroids. Two of them were Welsh and one an Indian, Subrata Kumar Paul.

Never before had the Commonwealth Games faced such shame. Debates, controversies and arguments broke out. The organisers were shattered. Ironically, the Indian weightlifting coach Pal Singh Sandhu and doctor Man Mohan Singh had stated earlier that "the Indians have done so well and without drugs which mar the sport".

PAUL, who won two silver and one bronze medal in the 67.5 kg event, was sent home but he carried back with him the medals he illegally won. Fortunately for the Indians, the spotlight shifted to the two Welsh lifters who also tested positive to drug tests. Welsh lifter David Morgan, who won three gold medals in the 82.5 kg category, decided to quit the sport in disgust. Said he: "I am ashamed of my sport. There are so many cheats in it. Even my medals seem tainted by them. But it is not just the athletes who must be punished, even officials should be punished, for, there are many who encourage the lifters to take this stuff."

The drugs scandal marred what has been one of the most successful games in the history of the event. Fifty five countries took part in these games and there were world class performances.

The minnows too had their moments. Even as Australia, England and Canada were taking home medals by the sackful, tiny Nauru and Cyprus too figured on the medals tally with a medal each, a gold at that. Stephen Marcus of Nauru gave his country of 8,000 people a gold for weightlifting in the presence of 80 countrymen from the local consulate and another 50 who flew in specially to see him lift. Then there was triple jumper Marios Hadjiandreou who shattered the games' record to land Cyprus' first gold medal in the Commonwealth Games.

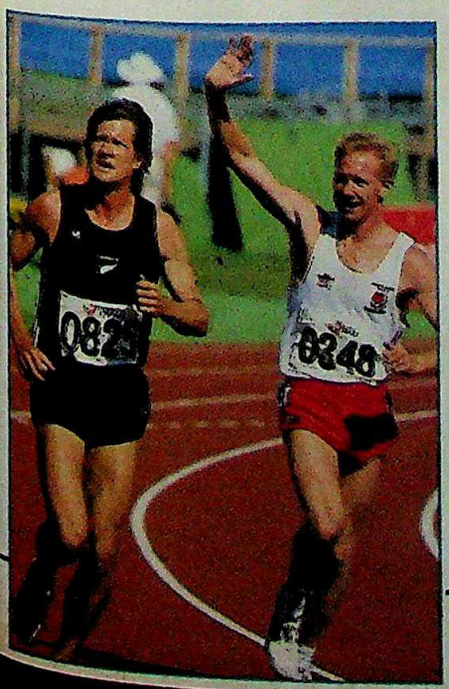
Paul's disgrace apart, this was India's best ever Commonwealth Games. For the first few days of the games, it seemed that weightlifting alone would provide the bulk of the medals. They did. But as the games progressed, there were useful contributions from other disciplines too. Indian shooters collected one gold, one silver and three bronze, while judo provided two bronzes and boxing yet another. Four of the six disciplines in which India fielded teams earned them medals, while in badminton, Deepti Thanekar came very close to one, losing the bronze in a play-off after reaching the semi-finals. The final tally: 13 gold, 8 silver and 11 bronze.

The absence of Indian athletes in the track and field events certainly cost a few medals. There were certain medals in the men's shot put, women's 4 × 400 m relay and quite possibly in the women's 400 m hurdles. But with P.T. Usha pulling out, the Amateur Athletic Federation of India decided not to enter a team.

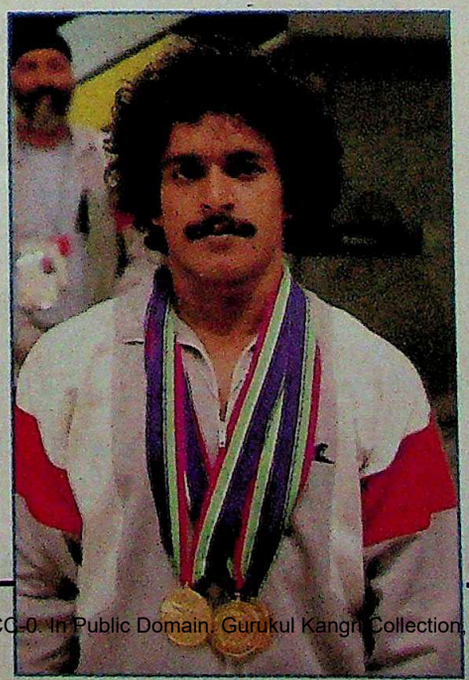
The overall success of the Indian campaign in the Commonwealth Games should be an eye-opener. The message from Auckland is clear: international exposure is what wins medals.

—V. KRISHNASWAMI in Auckland

England's Peter Eliot winning 1,500m



Punnuswamy with 3 gold medals

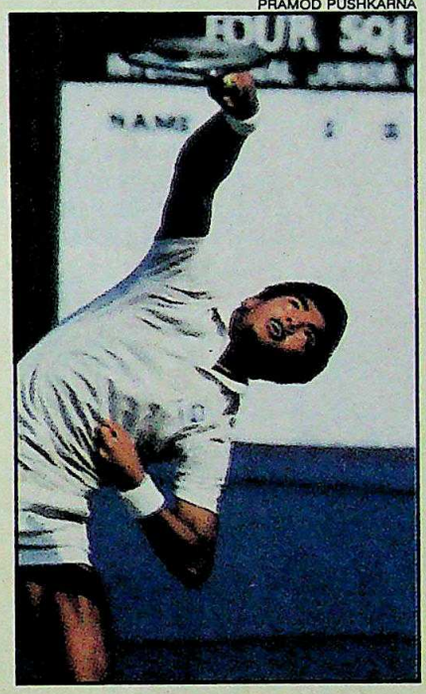


TENNIS

A Young Ace

INDIAN tennis, now in the twilight zone following the acrimonious exit of the Amritraj brothers, may have finally found a new star: Leander Paes, 16—a product of the BAT (Britannia-Amritraj Tennis) clinic.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Leander Paes: star on the rise

Last fortnight, the lean and dusky Paes surprised tennis aficionados by entering the final of the junior event of the Australian Open at Melbourne. On his way to the final, Paes demolished four seeded players, before losing in the final to second seed, West German Dirk Dier. And as if to prove that the victory was no flash in the pan, he won the singles and doubles title at the ITF junior tennis meet in Delhi.

If Paes had won the title in Melbourne he would have joined an elite band. The only other Indians to win junior Grand Slam titles are Ramanathan Krishnan who won the junior Wimbledon in 1954 and Ramesh Krishnan who won the junior Wimbledon and French titles in 1979. Said Paes: "It was a terrific run. I hope it becomes a habit." Paes is now ranked world junior number five.

Paes comes from sporting stock. Father Vece Paes was a hockey international and mother Jennifer was a basketball star who also represented India. And for a lad of 16, he's amazingly clearheaded about his tennis future. "I want to be the world number one," he says confidently. After his Australian run, it no longer sounds all that outlandish.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

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THE SWORD OF TIPU SULTAN

Communal Casualty

Hindu fundamentalists stall Sanjay Khan's serial

THE dagger of communalism hangs over *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*—Sanjay Khan's extravagant, 52-episode teleserial on the legendary 18th century ruler of Mysore. With Rs 2.5 crore already spent on the star-studded project, Khan was all set for the first telecast, scheduled for February 10. But for the jinxed serial there was yet another slip in store.

Faced with a spate of vitriolic outbursts against the heroic portrayal of Tipu, Minister for Information and Broadcasting P. Upendra waffled. "It will be screened," he said, "but we cannot ignore the protests."

Indeed, he could not. For in the forefront of the protest campaign was the National Front Government's chief ally, the BJP. Vociferously supported by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Kerala and Maharashtra units of the BJP are leading a campaign demanding a ban on the screening of the serial based on the book by Bhagwan S. Gidwani.

Says K.R. Pillai, Kerala BJP president: "Tipu, who was a traitor, a tyrant who resorted to large-scale conversions, is being made out to be a patriot." A memorandum submitted by the VHP to Upendra describes Tipu as a fanatic who committed atrocities on Hindus. And a writ petition filed by Dr Ravindra Ramdas, a historian and social worker, in the Bombay High Court says that Gidwani's book falsifies history.

Counters an indignant Gidwani: "Where were these people for the last 13 years that my book has been in the market?" Gidwani—who has flown down from Canada, where he is settled, to smoothen the ruffled feathers—is a distressed man. "Intellectually, I feel like committing suicide with all this talk of Hindus and Muslims," he declares.

Khan, too, maintains the book is "a beautiful documentary on communal harmony". And that the agitators are striving for political mileage. Asks he: "Or why were there no protests when I launched the project with fanfare in October 1986? Or last year when national attention was once again focused on the serial after the fire on the sets?"

Khan's position is unenviable. Caught between the fundamentalists on the one hand and vacillating Information and Broadcasting Ministry officials on the other, he faces a proposal by the officials to get the serial reviewed by a panel of historians. But he dismisses the suggestion. Asks he: "What will the historians judge? Is it a beauty contest?"

Support for Khan and Gidwani's stand on Tipu comes from noted historian Bipan Chandra. Says he: "If there is anybody who can be described as a hero in the context of 18th century history, it is Tipu. Tipu was not secular, like say Jawaharlal Nehru, but he definitely did not try and create an Islamic kingdom."

History has it that Tipu donated money, vessels and lamps to many temples, introduced coins with the images of Shiva and Parvati, and gave away hundreds of acres of wet land to temples in the Malabar region. According to the fundamentalists, Tipu, motivated by the greed for power and ambition, was only following the advice of astrologers.

But, says Bipan Chandra in defence: "Tipu did oppress Hindus, as he did the Christians, but because he was fighting a life and death battle against the British. He even killed Hindus, but as enemies and not as Hindus."

Khan is, of course, adamant that the serial be telecast. Says he: "I don't want to challenge Doordarshan unnecessarily by taking the devil's resort and suing them. But I will not sacrifice my rights to mischief mongers."

Sanjay Khan (centre) in a scene from Tipu; (above) Gidwani and his book: eye of a storm

And mischief mongers are exactly what the ministry is wary of. For as Bhaskar Ghose, additional secretary, says: "Reason fails before the power of TV." They have behind them the example of *Tamas*—the telecast of which led to a nationwide stir and the ransacking of the Hyderabad TV station, with mobs burning recorded programme tapes.

The dilemma, then, is to telecast or not to telecast. Fundamentalists, hell bent on getting the serial banned, repeatedly quote the case of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* to strengthen their case. Khan, meantime, even opposes the setting up of a panel of historians. Tipu's sword may finally get the better of the communal dagger, but it's unlikely this will happen in the immediate future.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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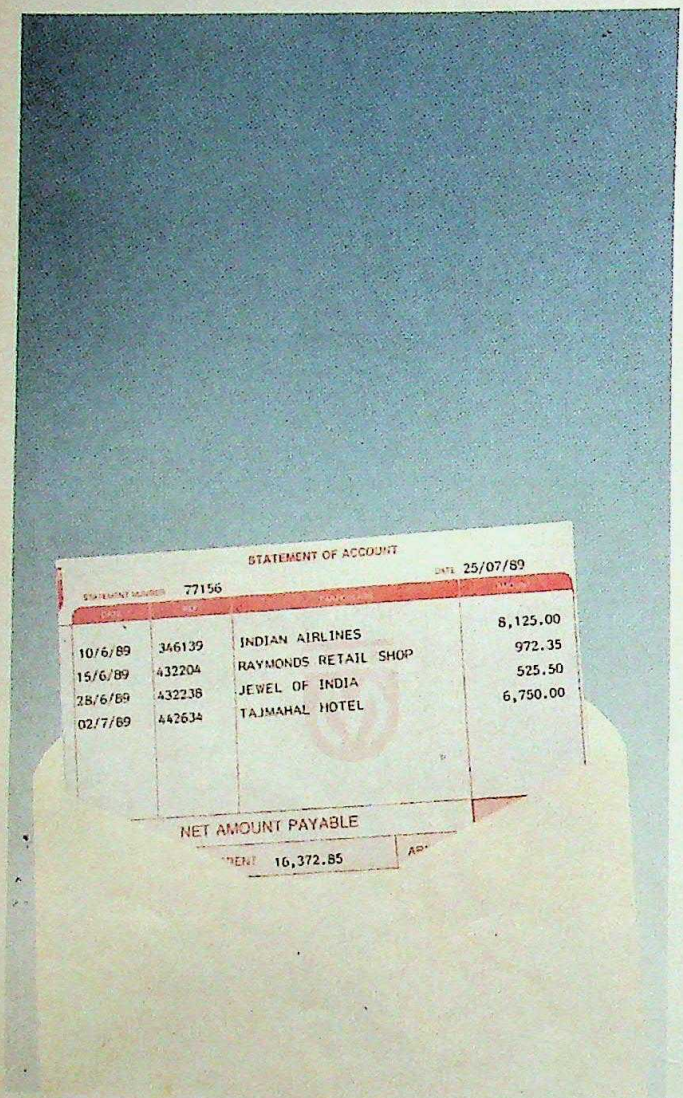

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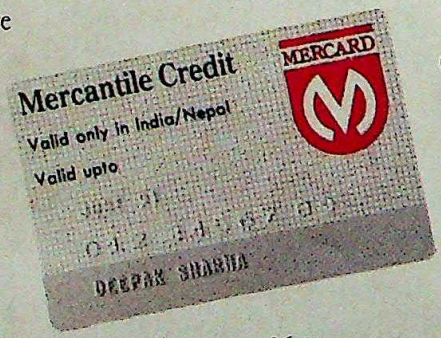

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SOVIET UNION

Strategic Gambit

Gorbachev takes away party's monopoly on power

FINALLY, in Moscow, the die is cast. The war-game scenarios drawn in behind-the-scenes strategy sessions for months, have become real battlelines, separating real combatants: President and Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and the conservative diehards of the party he leads.

Last fortnight, amid speculation that he may use the CPSU central committee meeting to quit as its chief, Gorbachev managed to surprise both friend and foe. He outflanked the conservatives by dissociating the party from its monopoly on power. As the committee voted overwhelmingly to renounce Article 6 of the Constitution, which gave it the dominant role, his critics were left searching for new moves. "This was a master-stroke. Now he will control the party and the power. All that has changed is that the party will not monopolise the power. His victory is in the nuance," said a Moscow-based diplomat. In the short run, the party had made only a symbolic concession as there is no likelihood of its losing power.

There was jubilation in pro-Gorbachev circles, though the new agenda for change failed to please liberal radicals like former Moscow Communist Party chief Boris Yeltsin, who thought the economic part of the programme was not pacy enough. But as conservative chieftain Yegor Ligachev—who called the proposals an effort to convert the Communist Party into a "political club" and had nasty exchange with Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze—smarted under its impact, it was evident that Gorbachev had proved himself a master tactician.

In retrospect, it is easy to sense the Gorbachev gameplan. While he faced criticism over his handling of the internal situation, particularly in Transcaucasia, he turned it to his advantage. The system of governance, he said, was too hidebound. Through carefully leaked stories, his media-managers let it be known that in a more direct presidential system, he would have been able to take emergency measures in Azerbaijan much earlier. Now the decision had to be cleared by the republic's party committee. It also had to go through two levels of decision-making—the executive and the party. Ideally, observers say, he may have liked to wait for a few more months and go to war closer to the party congress in October. But the inevitability of an attack on him for his handling of the ethnic situation, pushed him into a counter-offensive where he blamed the system rather than the recent changes he has brought about in it.

He also set the stage for the changes by letting his supporters organise a massive rally on the Red Square on the eve of the party meeting and conveyed other subtle messages. A *Pravda* news item, for example, praised a KGB colonel for catching a western spy. Sources said

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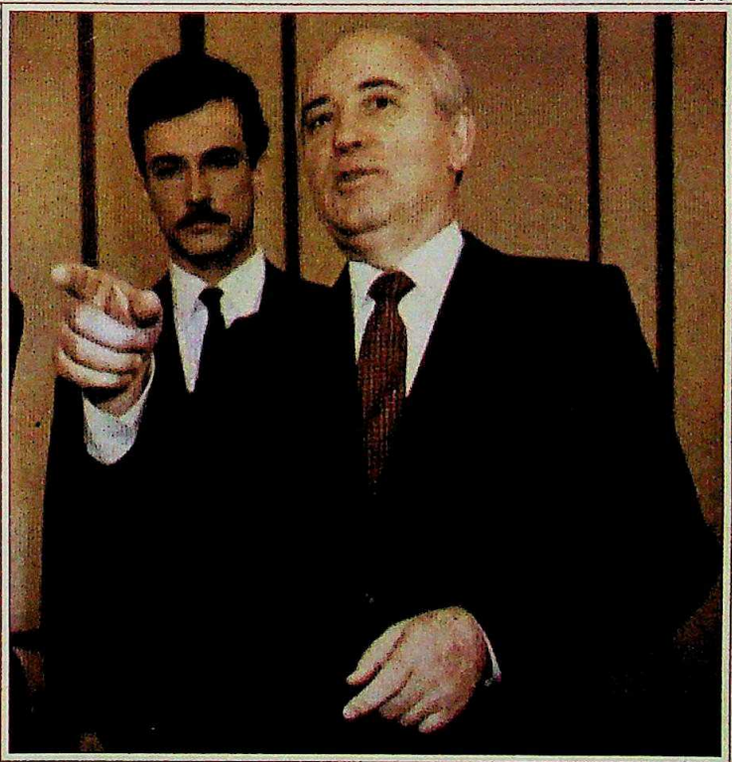

Rather than quit as general secretary of the party and dissociate the party from himself, Gorbachev has, in a master move, outflanked the conservatives by dissociating the party from its monopoly on power.

BHAWAN SINGH

Gennady Gerasimov, Foreign Ministry spokesman, said that while all political parties would now be equal, the Communist Party would like to be "more equal".

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the same colonel had earlier led the investigations against Ligachev and some of his key supporters.

There is much rejoicing in the West and in anti-communist circles elsewhere that the move marks the end of the communist movement in the world even if the Chinese Communist Party has firmly turned down suggestions to take the cue. But Moscow experts say this is short-sighted. "Gorbachev is trying to revitalise the Communist Party and help it through a quick mutation to survive modern times when the growth of media and general awareness has made authoritarianism a thing of the past," said a well-placed liberal. That is why he has not given up his hold on the party. There was much meaning to be read in the statement of Gennady Gerasimov, shortly after the committee meeting, when he said that while all political parties will be equal under the new system, the Communist Party would like to be "more equal". "The difference now is that Gorbachev would like his party to be more equal, but through victory in a free, multi-party election," explained a Moscow-based diplomat.

In the current situation that seems likely. While there have always been voices of dissent, the Soviet Union does not have any other political party of consequence and none is likely to emerge in the near future. Besides, the country has no leader to challenge Gorbachev in stature or popularity. Ligachev himself is a relative lightweight and whatever popularity he had, has been chipped by incriminating KGB investigations of corrupt practices against him. A likely challenge from within the party may emerge from the Leningrad party chief Gadaspov, but he will take a long time to acquire a national image.

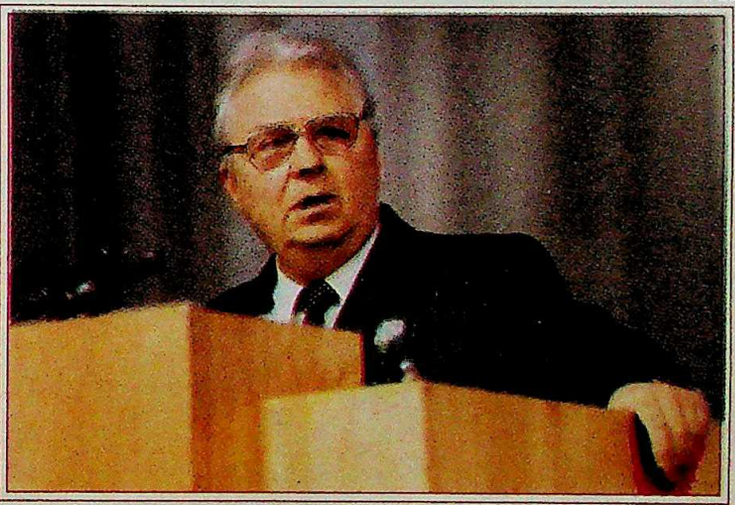
It is after calculating all this that Gorbachev decided to take the plunge. In Moscow's diplomatic and media circles it is common practice to find parallels for the recent happenings in Soviet history. Not surprisingly, many compare Gorbachev's concessions across the board—from East Europe to the republics on the Russian rim and from the party's hold on power to the arms control negotiations with the West—to the tactical Russian withdrawals against the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War.

GORBACHEV knows he has time. He is just 59. "If he spent all his time trying to keep the party high command under his control he would perhaps last out a few years but will be always on probation. If he can change the system and turn around his economy, he could be around for decades," said a western diplomat discounting, like others, any possibility of Gorbachev losing out. As Alois Mock, Austria's perceptive and activist foreign minister told INDIA TODAY in Vienna: "Gorbachev is stronger than most people give him credit for. Perhaps it's possible that he could lose. But it's not probable."

Now that the gloves are off, what will Gorbachev do next? It is logical that he will quickly move to build a new power centre around himself, independent of the party. He wants good political managers and administrators who come from within the party, but have the enterprise and strength to be able to function outside it. It will not be an easy task in a society where everybody, from the seniormost official to the factory workers, has over more than seven decades, been trained to function in one narrow groove assigned by the party. But failure to achieve that, and quickly, will render Gorbachev's victory at the committee meeting pyrrhic. Because the conservatives still have two clear opportunities to hit back. One comes in March with the local bodies' elections, at which the contest will be truly triangular with the party fighting the non-communist groups and the party factions fighting each other. The next and final battle will be fought in the party congress in October where either the party will reassert itself, or more likely Gorbachev will sweep it aside along with the authoritarian, monopolistic hold over power cemented through 70 years and emerge at the head of a brand-new Communist Party, learning to live in a plural system much like its offspring in Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic and so on.

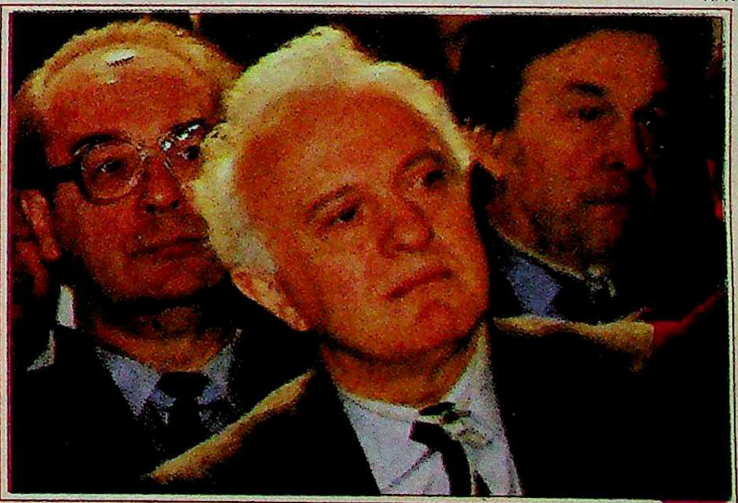
—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Moscow

TASS



Politburo member Yegor Ligachev led the conservative charge, accusing Gorbachev of reducing the Communist Party to a mere "political club".

APN



Foreign Minister Shevardnadze said conservatives would not have opposed the changes if they had understood the changed world situation.

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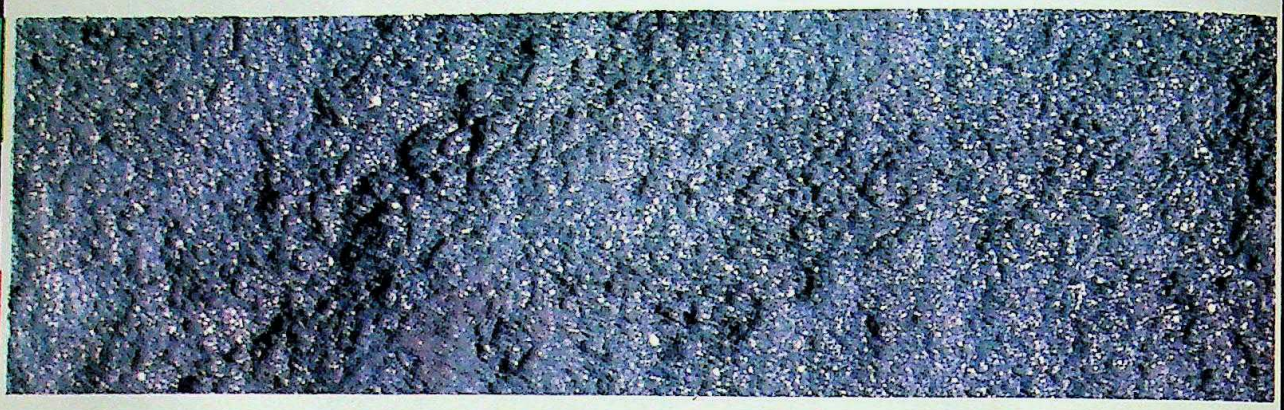

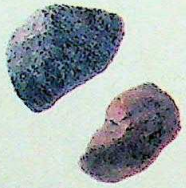

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LEPROSY

Battling the Bacteria

Tests on four newly developed vaccines begin

IT was the AIDS of medieval times. The mysterious scourge that struck at will maiming and deforming millions. Yet more than a 100 years after the discovery of the bacillus that causes the dreaded leprosy disease, scientists have yet to develop a vaccine against it.

Now, however, there is suddenly hope of a breakthrough. And appropriately enough, India which harbours an estimated five million leprosy patients—the largest in the world—is among the front runners in the global race to develop an anti-leprosy vaccine. Four of the three vaccines that are being or about to be tested for their efficacy have been developed in India itself.

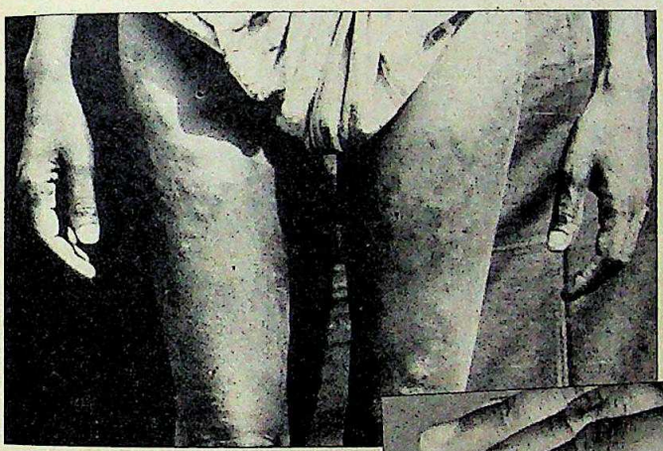
Since 1987, over 1,000 people in three districts of Maharashtra have been administered a leprosy vaccine developed by the Bombay-based Cancer Research Centre. Meanwhile, in Delhi over 300 people have been given a vaccine discovered by the National Institute of Immunology (NII). In Madras, the Indian Council of Medical Research(ICMR) is to begin trials on these two vaccines as well as one from Venezuela, cultivated from the tissues of the armadillo, a burrowing animal. And awaiting clearance is another vaccine developed by the Central Drug Research Institute in Lucknow.

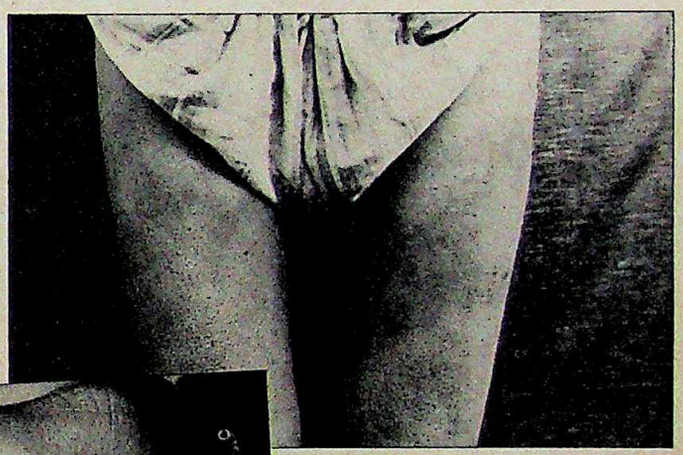
Given the slow progress of the disease, the efficacy of the vaccine may take years to prove. But already as a spin-off benefit, these vaccines are showing an ability to dramatically hasten the pace of recovery in those suffering from leprosy. The NII vaccine, for instance, cut short the recovery of patients suffering from a serious attack of leprosy by almost two to three years. As Pran Talwar, the institute's director, says: "The leprosy vaccine scenario has never looked so good. Initial results are encouraging but the battle is far from won."

It is a battle that is not going to be easily won too. *Mycobacterium Leprae*, the rod-shaped microscopic germ that triggers the disease, is a tricky customer. It attacks and progressively destroys the peripheral nerves around the face and limbs. Unlike popular conception, the bacterium itself doesn't cause the gruesome deformities. They occur as a result of the loss of sensation and are secondary complications. Several drugs have been discovered that reverse the progress of the disease and can even completely "cure" patients of it. But an effective vaccine has so far eluded researchers.

Experiments for a vaccine began way back in 1939 when it was found that the BCG vaccine against tuberculosis also triggered an immune response to leprosy. But extensive human trials in the early '70s met with mixed results. In some countries like Uganda it did provide a high degree of immunity against leprosy. But in others like India the results were discouraging.

The next breakthrough came in the late '70s, when scientists discovered that the armadillo was also susceptible to the disease. That raised the possibility of cultivating a large amount of bacteria, reducing their virulent properties and injecting it into the human body to trigger the immune response against the disease itself—the principle that most vaccines are based on. While the bacterium cultivated from the armadillo itself showed irregular results when combined with the BCG vaccine, the effects on preventing leprosy were dramatic.





(Clockwise from top left) Patient before and after vaccine dose; the vaccines

Meanwhile, Indian scientists adopted a different route. Their research was based on the fact that barely 1 per cent of the population exposed to leprosy actually was afflicted with the disease. Research showed that these people suffered from an immune deficiency specific to leprosy bacteria. Somehow, their bodies' defence mechanism failed to recognise the threat and allowed the disease to proliferate. If a bacterium similar to leprosy but without its disease producing ability could be cultivated, then it could be used as the ideal vaccine to trigger the body's immune system.

On that hope, the Cancer Research Institute reopened research in 1979 on a bacterium called ICRC cultivated from skin lesions of leprosy patients as far back as 1958. The ICRC bacterium, scientists discovered, was able to induce immunity against leprosy—making it an ideal candidate for a vaccine. Almost simultaneously, the NII was working on a dozen bacteria similar to the leprosy family. After careful testing they isolated

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one of them called *Mycobacterium W* that initial tests showed excellent immune response to leprosy in those injected with the vaccine. Says M.G. Deo, director of the Cancer Research Institute: "What's important about the Indian vaccines is that they are cheap to produce and exhibit the potential for both therapeutic and preventive use."

With the competition hotting up, Indian scientists were miffed with the ICMR for permitting simultaneous trials of the WHO-backed armadillo vaccine. Deo even accused the council of ignoring indigenous efforts and allowing what he terms "a costly vaccine with a dubious record of success abroad, to be introduced in India". Denying the charge, M.D. Gupte, officer-in-charge of ICMR's field unit on leprosy doing the Madras trials, says: "We decided to give all the vaccines a try and let the best win."

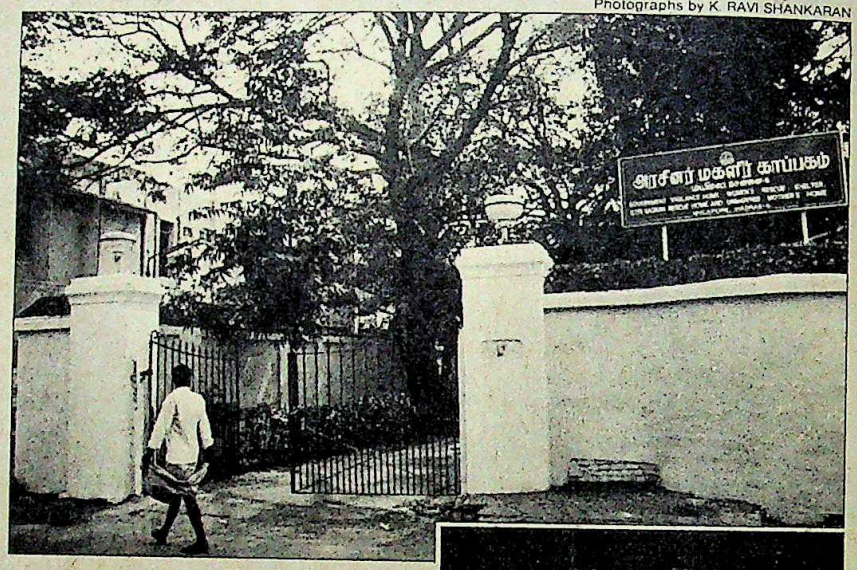
While it will take years for the final winner to emerge, a positive outcome of the trials is the discovery of the therapeutic value of these vaccines. That itself is good enough cause for cheer in an area of prolonged misery.

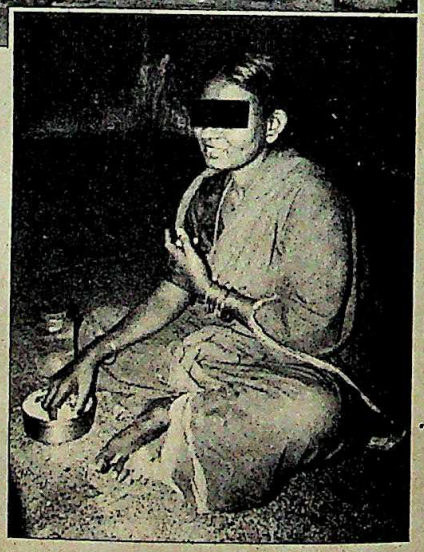
—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Delhi and Bombay

AIDS CARRIERS

In Custody

Photographs by K. RAVI SHANKARAN





Vigilance home; and an inmate

FOUR months ago, Parvathy came to Madras from Pondicherry to be near her daughter, Vennila. But the journey hasn't brought mother and daughter any closer. For Vennila, 21, is a prostitute who has been held at the Madras Vigilance Home since 1987. In normal cases, a prostitute is released after a two-year term at the home. Vennila has not been so fortunate. In a medical examination, she tested HIV-positive, which means she carries the AIDS virus. The authorities fear that if she is released, she might spread the disease. So, though her term has expired, Vennila continues to be detained.

For Parvathy, it has been an endless wait. She has managed to secure a job in Madras as a domestic help. Whenever she is free, she goes to the gates of the Vigilance Home to beg for the release of her daughter. "Every time they say they will release her after Pongal. But I have seen two Pongals go by and she is still in there," she says.

Vennila is just one of the 20-odd HIV-positive women who continue to be detained at the Madras Vigilance Home after the end of their terms. The officials of the home and the other inmates call them the "AIDS girls". For most social workers, medical specialists and research students, they are just guinea pigs. Many prostitutes have gone on hunger strike demanding an end to their incarceration. But that seems nowhere in sight. Rajeswari, a prostitute arrested in Cuddalore in 1988 who has also tested HIV-positive, asks wistfully: "I wonder if they will release me when my time is over."

Chances are she won't be. Says M.P. Nirmala, the director of approved schools and vigilance services: "If we release them, they will go back to prostitution. Many could get infected that way." Ironically, not all the prostitutes who test HIV-positive may be suffering from AIDS. Those testing positive have been known to respond negatively to the AIDS test a few months or years later.

In October last year, the superintendent of the home wrote a letter to the director of the Institute of Sexually Transmitted Diseases General Hospital asking whether the women could be released. After a meeting convened by the AIDS surveillance committee of the hospital, it was decided to retain the women for two more months.

The two months have ended but the agony continues. Interestingly, not all doctors agree that forcibly detaining these women is a solution to the problem. "That is the surest way to drive the disease underground," says a doctor who has worked with the inmates of the home. He argues that prostitutes, who would otherwise have voluntarily got themselves tested for AIDS, will now conceal it until the symptoms manifest themselves.

Others argue that it is not a crime to suffer from AIDS. And that while prostitutes are a high-risk group liable to spread the infection, they can't be entirely blamed for it. Says Shyamala Nataraj, a social worker and activist who met a few of the HIV-positive women eight months ago before the authorities clamped down on them: "Public opinion will always be against them because they are prostitutes. No blame will ever fall on the men who visit them. Are they alone to blame?" Shyamala will soon be filing a public-interest litigation demanding the release of these women.

In the dark tunnel that the Madras Vigilance Home has become for the prostitutes testing positive to AIDS, that is a glimmer of light. Though only a glimmer as yet. —KAVITHA SHETTY

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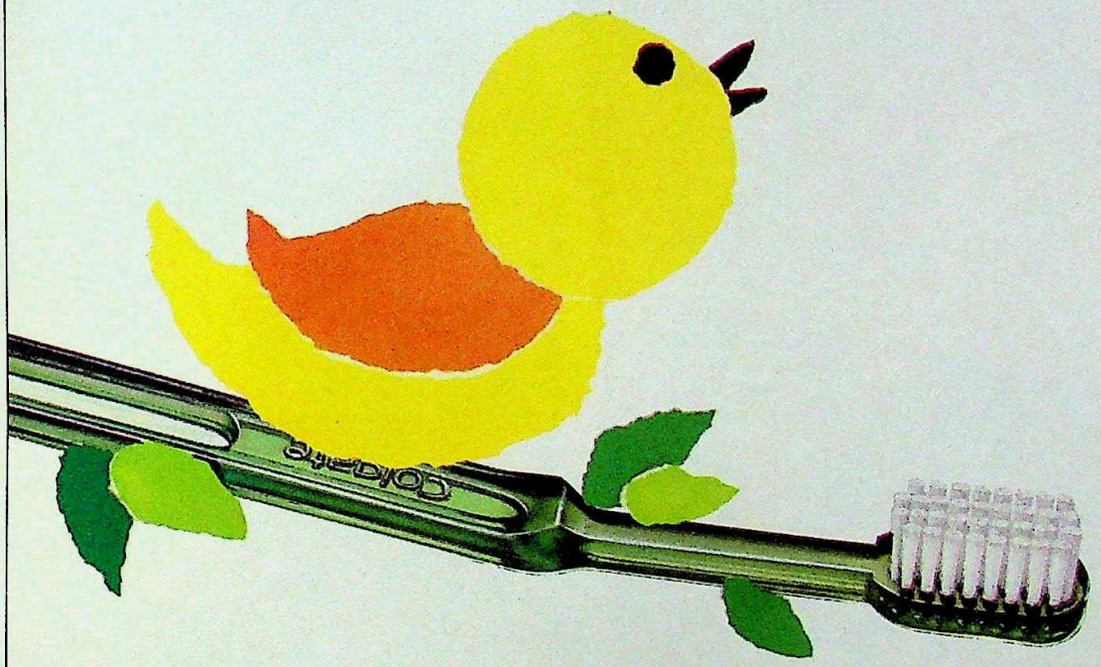

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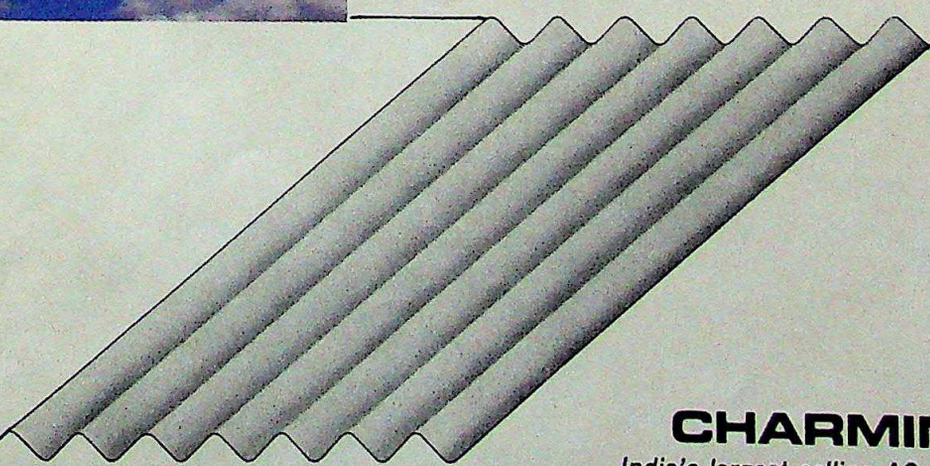

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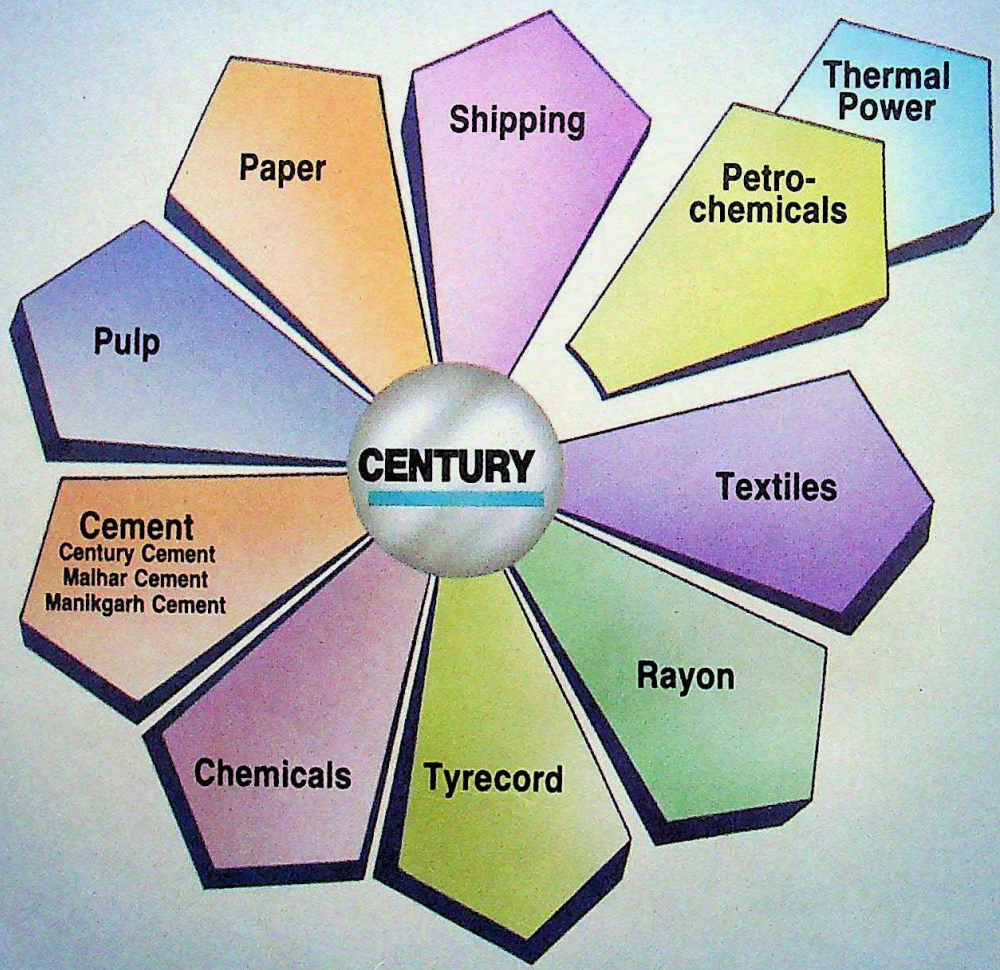

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Avoidable Honours

AMONG the major pitfalls for journalists in any society with a relatively free press is to succumb to the establishment's efforts to coopt them. There is, of course, the seemingly growing Indian tribe of partisan journalists who happily fight battles for or against the establishment. However, when an establishment itself chooses to honour them as the chosen ones, it has certainly won a major victory.

By the same token, journalists' capacity to be impartial purveyors of the political and socio-economic scene at home and abroad is irreparably damaged. Identified as they become with the establishment, they lose that most important and prized possession of an independent journalist: credibility.

The Janata Dal's generosity to journalists in the Republic Day honours raised a few eyebrows. The list as such came as no surprise. It included N. Ram of *The Hindu*, Arun Shourie of the *Indian Express* and Nikhil Chakravartty of *Mainstream*. The first two have been crusaders against the Rajiv Gandhi government, Ram almost single-mindedly on the Bofors issue, and Shourie in a more general sense against all that the previous government and its leader stood for.

Chakravartty, for his part, has been a trenchant critic of the Rajiv Gandhi government and, by reflex action as it were, a supporter of what Vishwanath Pratap Singh promised.

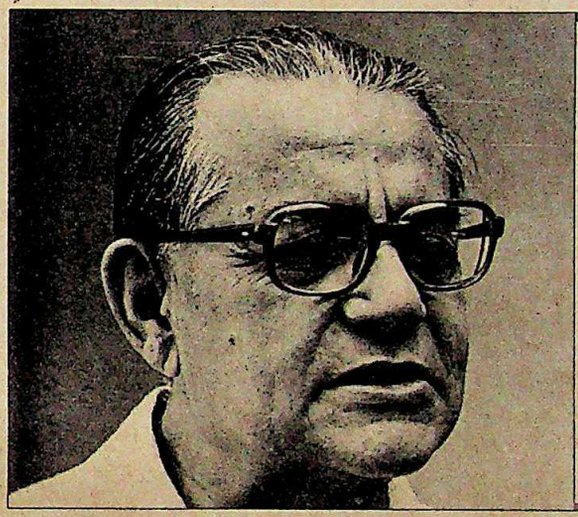
Since these three journalists, among others, played their part, however small it might have been, in the defeat of the Rajiv Gandhi government, the Padma Bhushan awards given to them were an expression of the National Front's gratitude.

It came naturally to the Janata Dal leaders that journalists who helped their cause should be rewarded, rhetoric on the free press and autonomy for the electronic media notwithstanding.

The attitude of Indian journalists as a whole to the imposition of Emergency in the '70s has left a scar on the profession. And one wondered what the reaction of the honoured journalists would be.

It is to the credit of Chakravartty that he—he alone among the journalists honoured—grasped the essence of the problem. In declining the award, he said: "Journalists having to be engaged in constant interaction with political leaders should try to avoid being identified, in the public eye, with any particular establishment. This has become all the more imperative today when political life in our country has become sharply polarised."

In contrast, *The Hindu*, in its report on the awards, chose to make a point of mentioning that two *Hindu* men had similarly been honoured in the past—Kasturi Srinivasan in 1956, and G. Narasimhan in 1968.



Nikhil Chakravartty: admirable stand

Chakravartty alone understood that journalists should avoid being identified with any particular establishment.

Journalists are a part of the society that they live in and derive their sustenance from it. The growing socio-economic pains in a developing country such as India inevitably result in contradictions and are mirrored in the country's press.

Contradictions certainly abound in Indian journalism. We have a relatively free press, encumbered though it is with government regulations of one kind or another. And we have a controlled electronic media, whatever name the Government of the day may choose to give it.

In the print medium, there are newspapers and newspapers. Non-metropolitan newspapers, as a rule, have less freedom than enjoyed by their metropolitan cousins. Among the latter, the new trend is to have activist owners who keep their editors on a tight leash.

But the basic problem arises out of our political milieu. Whatever their affiliations, our politicians have not fully accepted the concept of free media. Even outside the Emergency, Indira Gandhi tried various ideas to tame the press. One was "development journalism", another was to decry the "jute press". A third was to suggest that given India's range of problems, the country could not afford a truly free media.

Given half a chance, the ruling establishment of the day would make the press a pale copy of Doordarshan and All India Radio. But the existence of a rumbustious press makes that task difficult, if not impossible. Attacks on the press must perforce be indirect—through raising the cost of newsprint and other imposts, the arm-twisting of proprietors who tend to be industrialists and suborning those who write, the journalists.

The National Front's present problems in conceptualising what it means by an autonomous electronic media are evidence enough of the dilemma of fulfilling an election promise without inviting ridicule. The basic problem, of course, is that what our politicians mean by free media does not square with the truth.

How much easier it is then to simply coopt journalists. And what better way to do it than heap official honours on them?

Tailpiece: V.C. Shukla, the czar of the Information Ministry during the Emergency, made the most amazing statement of his political career at a debate in New Delhi on January 20. He said he was for abolishing censorship on video news cassettes. Interestingly, as information minister, he had warned me in 1975: "The process of censorship is irreversible."

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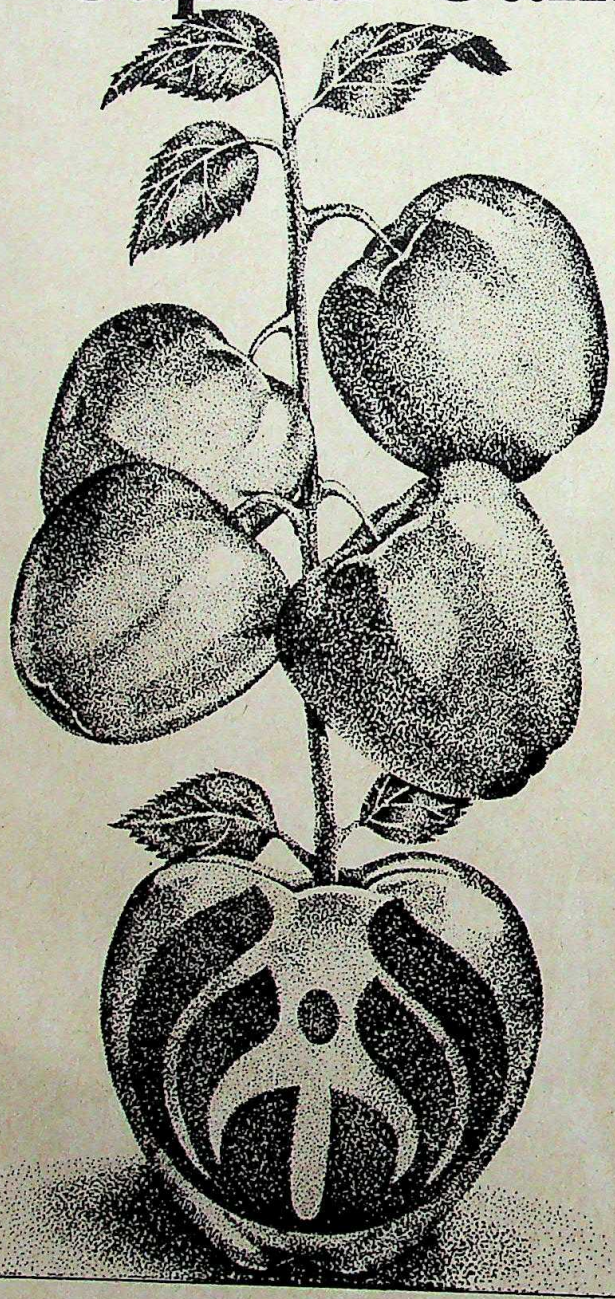

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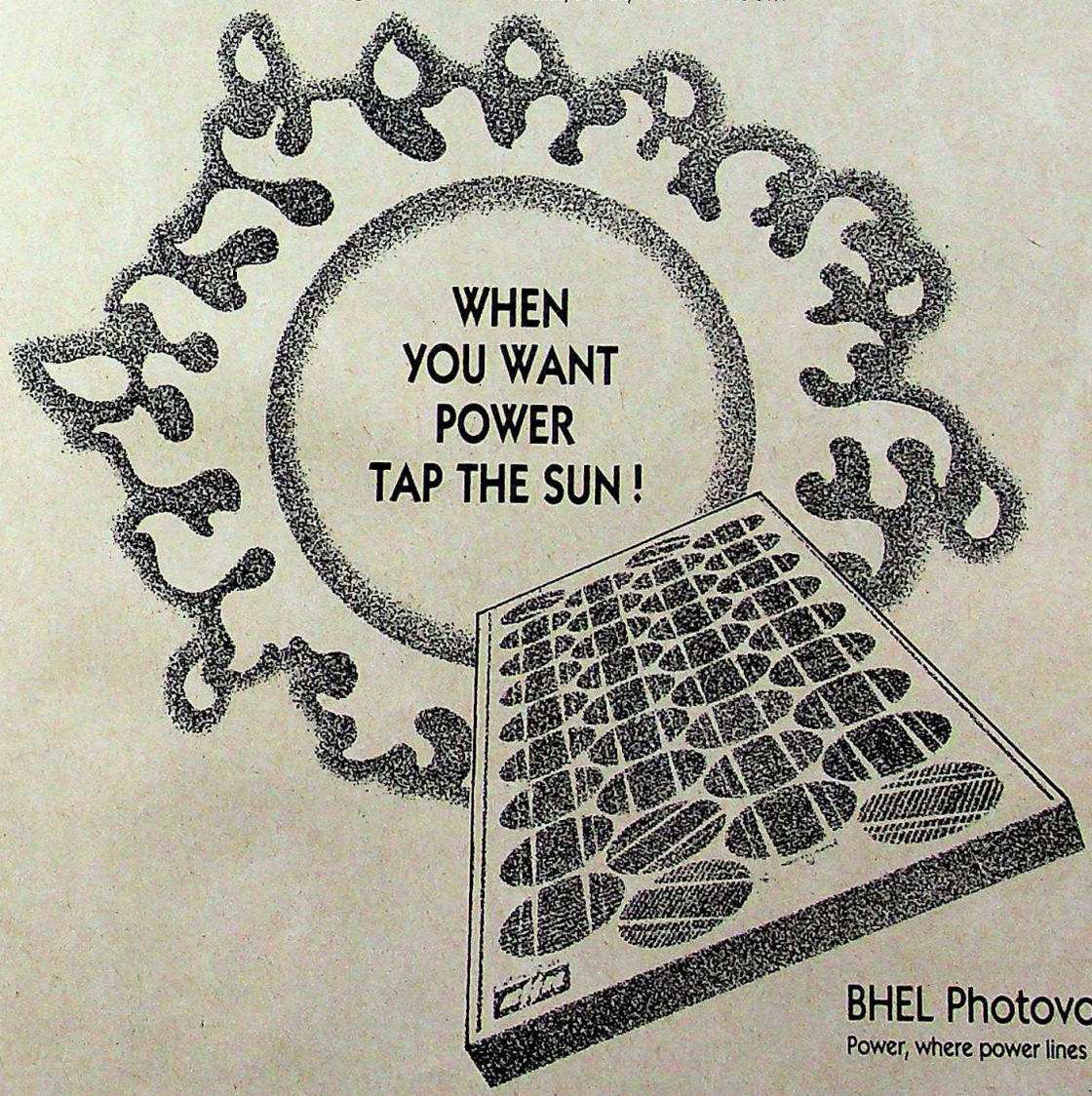

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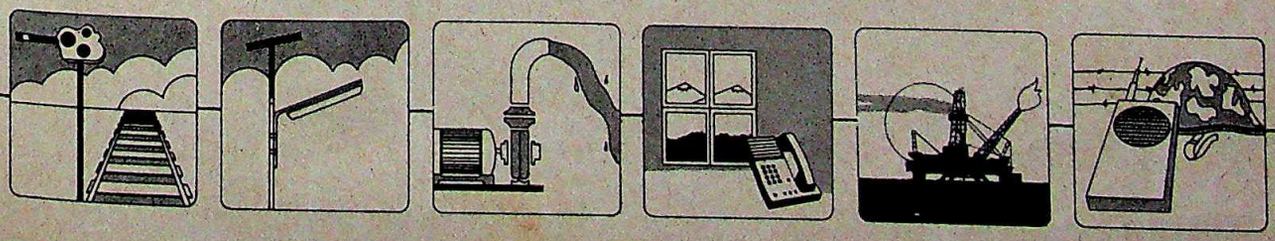

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NAMAS BHOJANI

Goa Portuguesa: tickling the palate

BOMBAY EATERIES

An Ethnic Feast

A string of restaurants offers a different cuisine

SOMETHING new is cooking in the great melting bowl of Bombay. And the aroma that's wafting out has a distinctly ethnic tang to it.

Until now, eating out in the city meant choosing between Udipi, Punjabi, Mughlai and Chinese cuisine. Now a string of new restaurants is offering ethnic cuisine of a kind that was earlier tucked away in dusty by-lanes which only the cognoscenti knew of. In downtown Bombay, Rajasthani restaurants like Chetana and Vyanjan, in the near suburbs Goan restaurants like Goa Portuguesa, O Balcao and Saayba, and in central Bombay Malwani restaurants like Saranga and Sindhudurg have opened doors. Suddenly, ethnic cuisine is big business.

Says Saranga owner Sanjay Pednekar, 27, a jeweller: "The growth has exceeded my wildest expectations. I'd expected the local Malwani population to patronise my restaurant. But now everybody is coming in."

Suhas Awachat, 30, would agree. A physician, he shut down his polyclinic to launch Goa Portuguesa, "smuggling" five chefs from Goa to unleash a menu of *sungto* (prawn), *kalwa* (oyster), *teesryo* (shell) and clams with *bibinca* (a rich dessert). In just one year, Goa Portuguesa has acquired a clientele that reads like a who's who of Bombay: Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, model Shyamolie Verma, cricketer Dilip Vengsarkar, singer Remo Fernandes, *Times of India* Editor Dileep Padgaonkar, Taj executive chef Satish Arora and Umesh, son of former CBI chief Mohan Katre. Now Awachat plans to expand to Pune, Goa, Delhi, Singapore and Dubai.

The food elsewhere is equally delectable. The *dal-bati-churma* at Vyanjan is a gourmet's delight. The succulent fish—mackerel, pomfret or rawas—at Sindhudurg, fried with just the right amount of spices, is mouth-watering. The new Goan restaurants have redefined not only the way lobsters should be eaten—the meat, with curried spices, onions and tomatoes looking invitingly at you from the carefully broken and garnished shells—but also the way prawns should be served—between rolled papads. R.R. Plantain Leaf in central Bombay—part of the Ramana Reddy chain of Karnataka—which opened last year, introduced *gongura* dishes of chicken and mutton of Andhra Pradesh, served on a plantain leaf.

What explains Bombay's sudden craving for ethnic cuisine? Says Milika Hariani, a food critic: "People have become more adventurous." And Saroj Merani, programme manager at the United States Information Service, who last year co-authored a book on Bombay's restaurants, points out: "Earlier, the Indian attitude to food was to look at it as life-sustaining. Now we are in an age of gluttony. We look upon food as something to be enjoyed."

Besides, ethnic cuisine seemed a natural follow-up after the turn to ethnic attire and interiors. And with more and more women going out to work, it is tempting after hours of commuting to venture into a restaurant that offers something out of the ordinary rather than sit at home to chop vegetables. Prices too are not steep. At most of the restaurants, it is possible to order a meal for two beginning at Rs 60.

For more and more Bombayites, that's a price pitched to whet the appetite.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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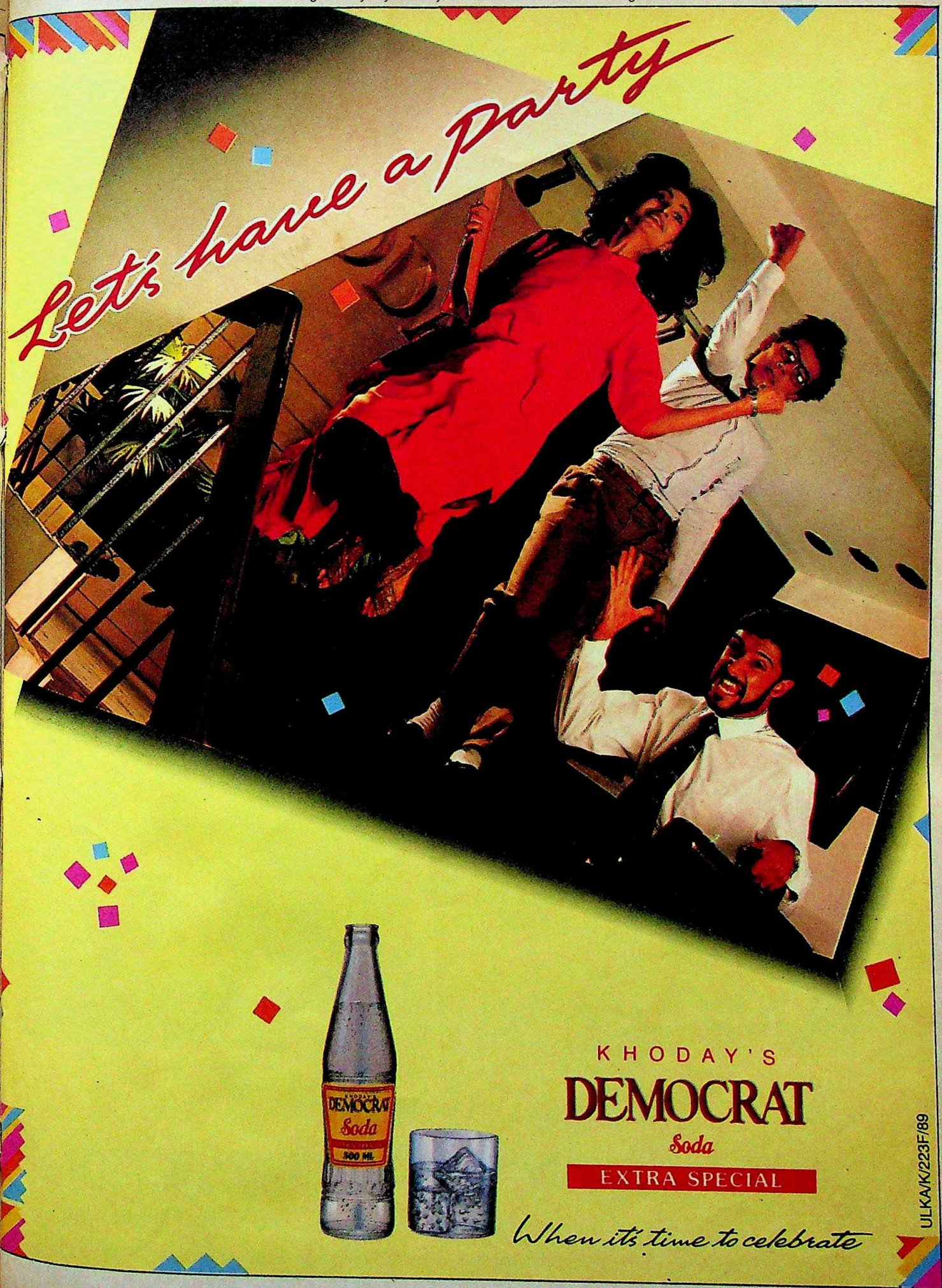

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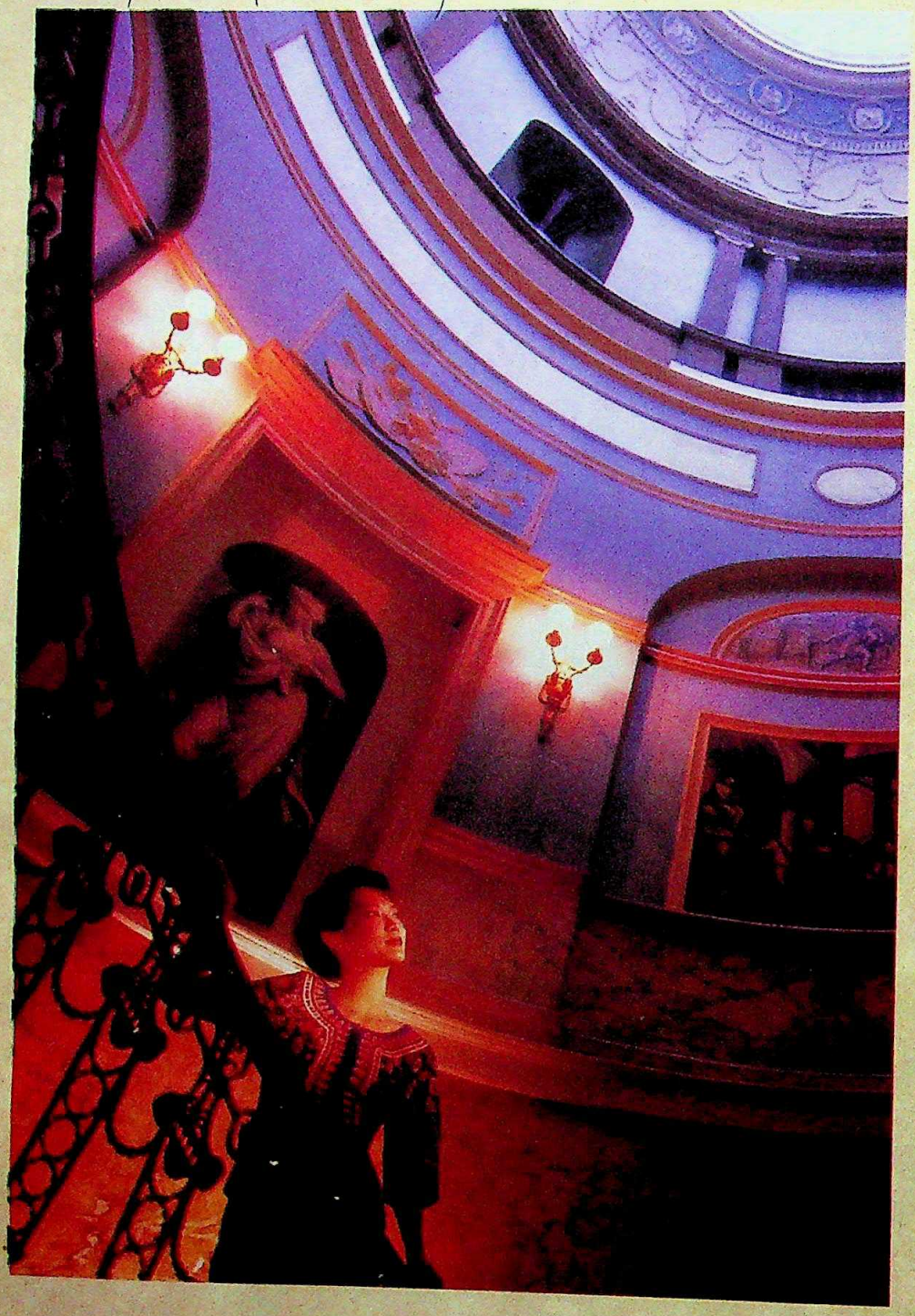
Singapore Girl in Gallery



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Voluminous Effort

Spirited campaign to restore historic library

THE 186-year-old Asiatic Society of Bombay, one of the oldest and finest libraries in India, has been in such a sorry state in recent times that it now resembles a dump for dog-eared and dust-laden books. Even the city's literati had begun to turn away from the historic library in disgust. Bemoaned writer Dom Moraes, who visited the Asiatic Society library after a long gap: "It was like meeting a beautiful woman one loved years ago and finding she has syphillis."

But suddenly there seems to be a miracle cure. Last October the society elected as its president Damodar R. Sardesai, 59, Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles. The renowned historian, who spends half a year in India, has taken up the task of restoring the society to its old glory with great vigour, and launched a campaign to raise Rs 2.5 crore for improving and expanding the library's activities. "I had not imagined that the situation was so bad—the society's collection of books, manuscripts and coins is exceptional, but there are not enough funds to fulfil basic objectives," Sardesai pointed out.

Founded by three Scotsmen in 1804, the Asiatic Society has an invaluable collection of around three lakh books, a third of which are more than a 100 years old. There are several rare first editions. It also has 3,000 manuscripts in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and other languages and 10,000 old coins. Some of its treasures are so valuable that they are in safekeeping in a State Bank of India vault. These include a 14th century, illustrated copy of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* for which the Italian dictator Mussolini had offered a million pounds.

The society could raise a fortune by selling some of its treasures abroad, but Sardesai is vehemently opposed to the idea. "So many of our treasures are lying in the West, so let us keep some of theirs here," he says.

Sardesai has roped in several private institutions and corporations, and the state Government (which subsidises the library's annual Rs 20-lakh budget) to not only raise money but also to make the society into a lively cultural and intellectual centre.

Says Bal Mundkur, chief of Ulka advertising agency who heads the Asiatic Society's resource mobilisation committee: "It's a time bound, military-style operation, and we hope to soon make the Asiatic a cultural show-place."

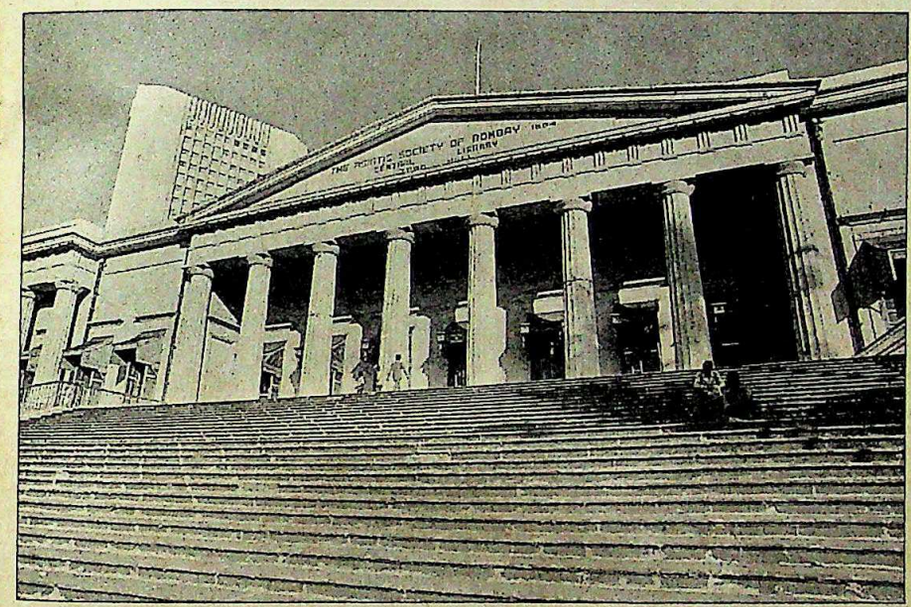
The focus of the campaign, which was slated for launch this month, mostly with exhibitions of old prints, photographs, rare coins and artefacts, is to restore and expand the treasure-house of books and manuscripts. The British Council is flying in expert restorer Frederic Marsh to assist in repairing. The library catalogue will be computerised, as also a list of all Sanskrit manuscripts available in Maharashtra. This will be on sale to research institutions.

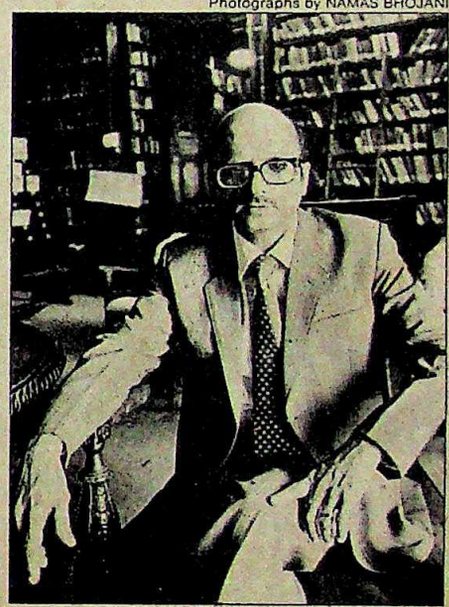
Though the library has a fine collection of old books, there are yawning gaps in the modern section, since not many books have been purchased in the last three decades. Sardesai plans to allocate nearly Rs 40 lakh to make up the backlog, and also encourage individuals to donate private collections to the society. Recently, Justice Bakhtawar Lentin gifted 600 books on law and jurisprudence to the library. Sardesai also plans to bring out limited editions of some of the society's rare possessions, like *The Divine Comedy* and Firdousi's *Shahnama*.

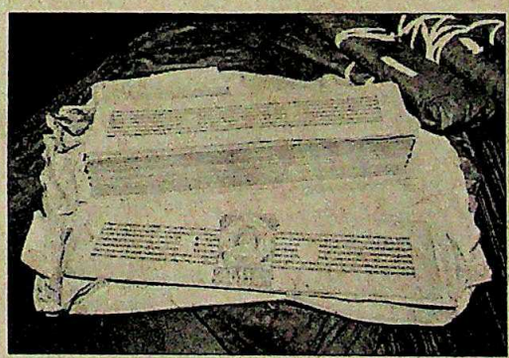
For years, the grime-encrusted marble statues of the society's benefactors, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Jugunnath Sunkersett, have sat silently among the dust-laden books like ghosts in a crumbling mansion. But the spirit of the library's founders seems to be stalking the corridors once again.

—M. RAHMAN

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI







(Clockwise from left) Society building; Sardesai; and a valuable manuscript

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BY K. NATWAR SINGH

Windows to India

IF I were asked to draw up a list of 100 books on India, I would produce one in no time. A list of 50 books would present no insurmountable problems. If we reduce the number to 25 then I would have to pause, scratch my head, think of tossing up a coin to include some and eliminate others. When I get down to selecting 10, the exercise becomes intellectually challenging, exciting, exasperating and exhausting.

At this stage mental lethargy gets the better of one, and one is reduced to suggesting somewhat shamefacedly the Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre book *Freedom at Midnight*, which is high class journalism, but catering to the lowest (cerebral) common denominator. It held my interest without making me think.

But if not 10 books and if not *Freedom at Midnight*, then what? I have after endless deletions, inclusions and much self-inflicted 'selection agony' decided on five books. Any such list must inevitably arouse controversy. It will be considered subjective. I have, I hope, succeeded in keeping personal bias out of it.

The books I have selected are not all for scholars (although scholars will not find them synthetic), not for research students, certainly not for pseudo-scholars, a tribe that proliferates with disturbing speed. The books are not perhaps the most profound, they are not best sellers, but in my judgement offer wholesome, entertaining fare that ought to not only attract and spark the interest of intelligent and sympathetic readers and visitors but also encourage them to go deeper into that vast and wonderful subject called India.

My list does not cover all departments of knowledge but is comprehensive enough. One added advantage is that all five books are readily available, having been continuously in print since publication: *The Discovery of India* by Jawaharlal Nehru (1946); *Sources of Indian Tradition* compiled by Wm. Theodore de Barry, Stephen Hay, Royal Weiler and Andrew Yarrow (1958); *Life of Mahatma Gandhi* by Louis Fischer (1951); *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* by Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1951); *The Great Moghuls* by Bamber Gascoigne (1971).

Since understatement and courteous restraint are not among our better known qualities, I can readily hear a chorus of loud protest: No Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalidas! What about Tagore, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan (all included in *Sources of Indian Tradition*)! How can the claims of Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, R.K. Narayan and Khushwant Singh be ignored? And who but an ignoramus would leave out Ananda Coomaraswamy, A.L. Basham, Amaury de Reincourt, V.S. Naipaul, K.M. Panikkar, T.G.P. Spear, Romila Thapar, *Kama Sutra!*

Another person no doubt could give a different list of five books and make out a good case for each one. Let me, however, give my reasons for my five.

The Discovery of India selects itself. Nehru's vision, love of India and his sense of history make compelling reading. He relates the past to the present and looks to a great future for India. A future which he, in so significant a measure, was to shape.

The personal and the impersonal interweave with sensitivity and style, reason and emotion are blended harmoniously, idealism is tempered with realism. His humanism is luminous.

Sources of Indian Tradition provides the general reader with an understanding of the "intellectual and spiritual traditions which remain alive in India". The compilers have selected passages from our ancient spiritual, philosophical and religious writings which amount to nothing less than an adventurous search for truth and enlightenment. It is a scintillating panoramic view of the evolution of Indian thought and culture.

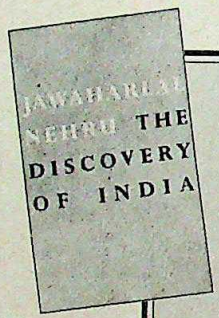
Islam and Sikhism are not neglected. Nor are the political, social and economic developments in the 20th century. The sections on the awakening of India in the 19th century are truly inspiring. Three instructive chapters on Pakistan make it a truly sub-continental book. Contributors include Basham, I.H. Qureshi and Romesh Thapar.

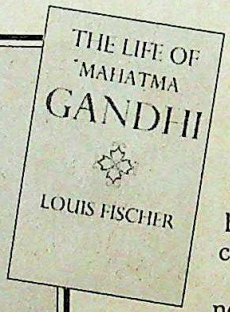
Fischer's *Life of Mahatma Gandhi* is indispensable reading. Attenborough drew heavily on it for his film. Gandhiji's *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* is a unique book but the uninitiated would do well to get to it via Louis Fischer.

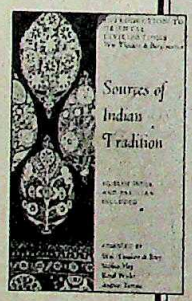
Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* is the best book to come out of the Indo-British encounter and is not likely to be surpassed.

The Great Moghuls by Bamber Gascoigne looks deceptively like a coffee table decoration, to be seen and not read. This lively and engaging book should be read to get the feel, the vibes and the atmosphere of Mughal India.

These books may not provide instant illumination but they do not exhale stale air either. They add up to an integrated and rounded offering on India, that is Bharat, that is Hindustan.







These five books ought to encourage readers to go deeper into that vast and wonderful subject called India.

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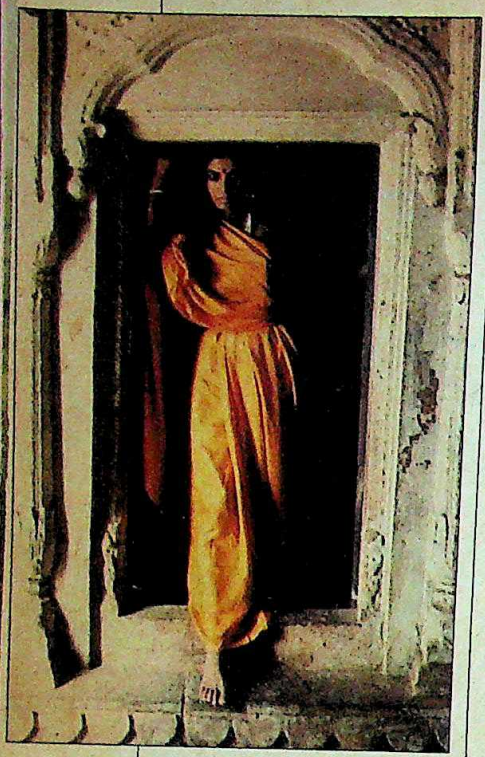
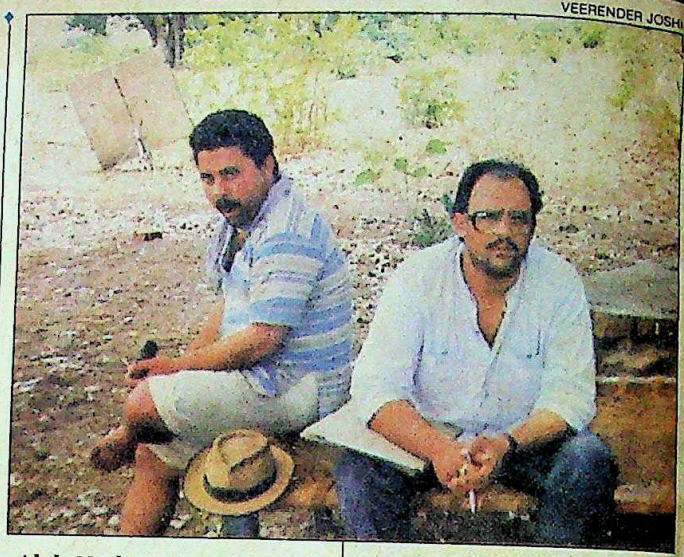


Vashisht: classic role

◆ Work is pretty much song and dance for her. But mostly of the classical kind. **Mita Vashisht**, 27, is fetching good reviews for playing Rani Rupmati in Kumar Shahani's *Khayal Gatha*, which has won the Critics Award at the Rotterdam film festival. The film uses famous Indian love legends to interpret the *khayal* tradition of Hindustani music. Says Vashisht: "Working for the film was a different experience." But parallel cinema is the NSD graduate's proven turf. The different experience will come when she enters the razzmatazz world of commercial cinema.

◆ Out West, they may romance the stone, but in India we romance the marble. Courtesy Shah Jehan. At the moment it's brash nymphet **Pooja Bedi** *Romancing the Taj*. The telefilm is the first of a series of Indo-Soviet joint productions, *Heroes of History*, and is the debut directorial venture of Gul Anand—producer of *Hero Hiralal*. Pooja is Tarana, the modern girl who has a tiff with her boy-friend and in a reverie meets Shah Jehan in Agra Fort. Gushes she: "It would be divine if somebody built the Taj Mahal for me." Any takers?

Bedi: Love at the Taj



VEERENDER JOSHI

Alok Nath in *Boond Boond*

◆ Not long ago there appeared an actor in a TV serial who resembled V.P. Singh. The serial: *Boond Boond*. The actor: **Alok Nath**. The crime: subtle plug for the Janata Dal leader. The punishment: yanked off the air after the first part was shown in July 1989. Now that V.P. Singh is no longer taboo to Mandi House, *Boond Boond* will be back on Doordarshan on February 22. "We are looking forward to that day," said producer Harish Dhawani. The day when the 'prime minister' will be back on prime time.

◆ After playing Draupadi for years, creating an oeuvre on the power of Indian women in six separate solo dance pieces seems another Herculean effort. But for **Mallika Sarabhai** it is all a commitment. "I needed to perform something that spoke strongly of what I feel," she said about the dance-drama *Shakti*, an ode to the power of women. It has elements of Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, and Kathakali and presents women like Rani of Jhansi, Meerabai and the four Kerala sisters who committed suicide to avoid dowry problems. That's Sarabhai Shakti.

Sarabhai in *Shakti*: woman power

Lt. Col. P.S. SIBIA (Retd.)

◆ For once, he's playing himself and not the angry young man. A 55-minute video, *Follow the Star*, by BBC's Channel 4, traces the life and work of Hindi film don, **Amitabh Bachchan**. In the video, the star recalls his father telling him to "jump the wall" if he ever found any door locked. He clears the video as "very thorough". Inference: nothing controversial in there.

Bachchan: video wise

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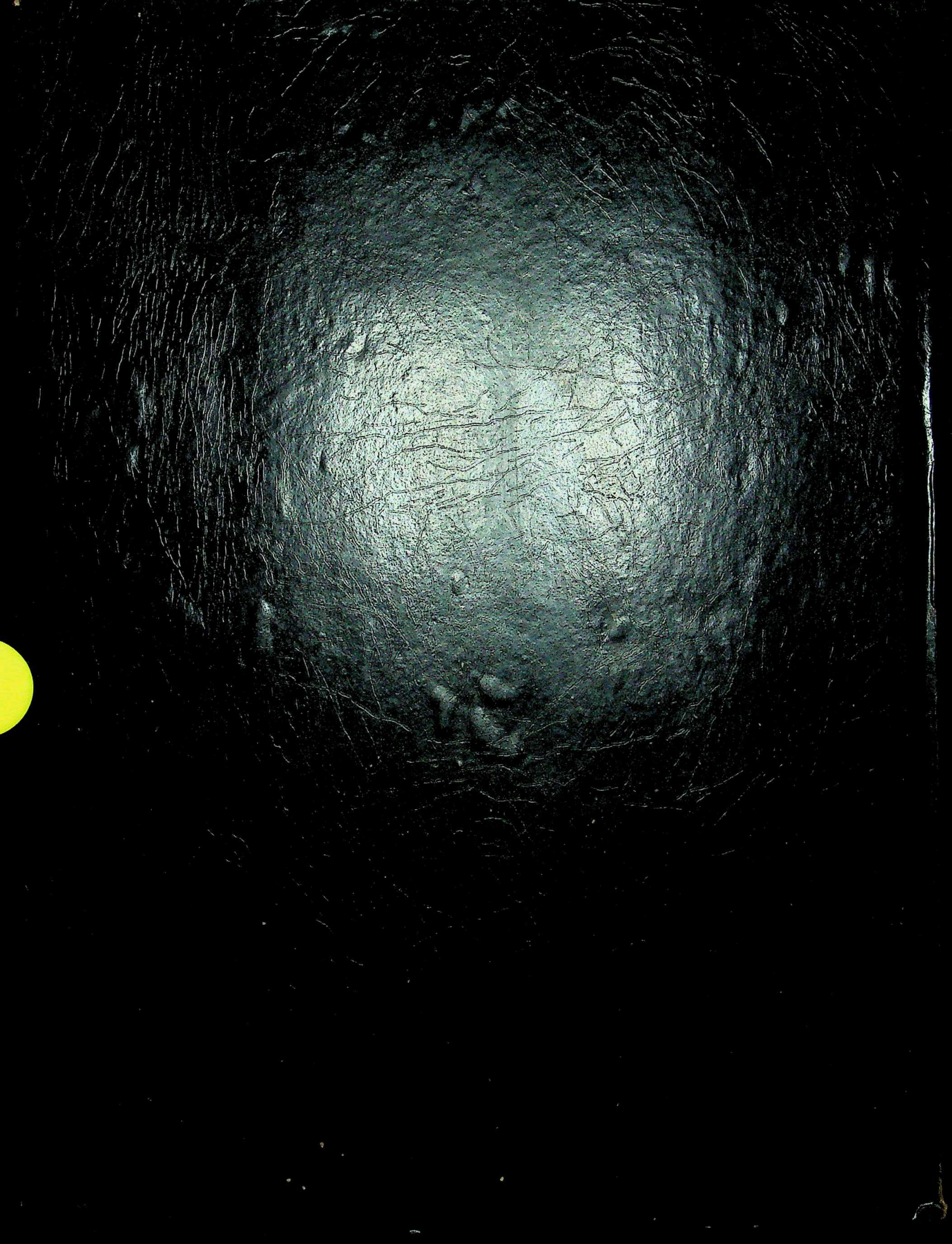
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